

jazz, improvised music and...

MARCH 1985

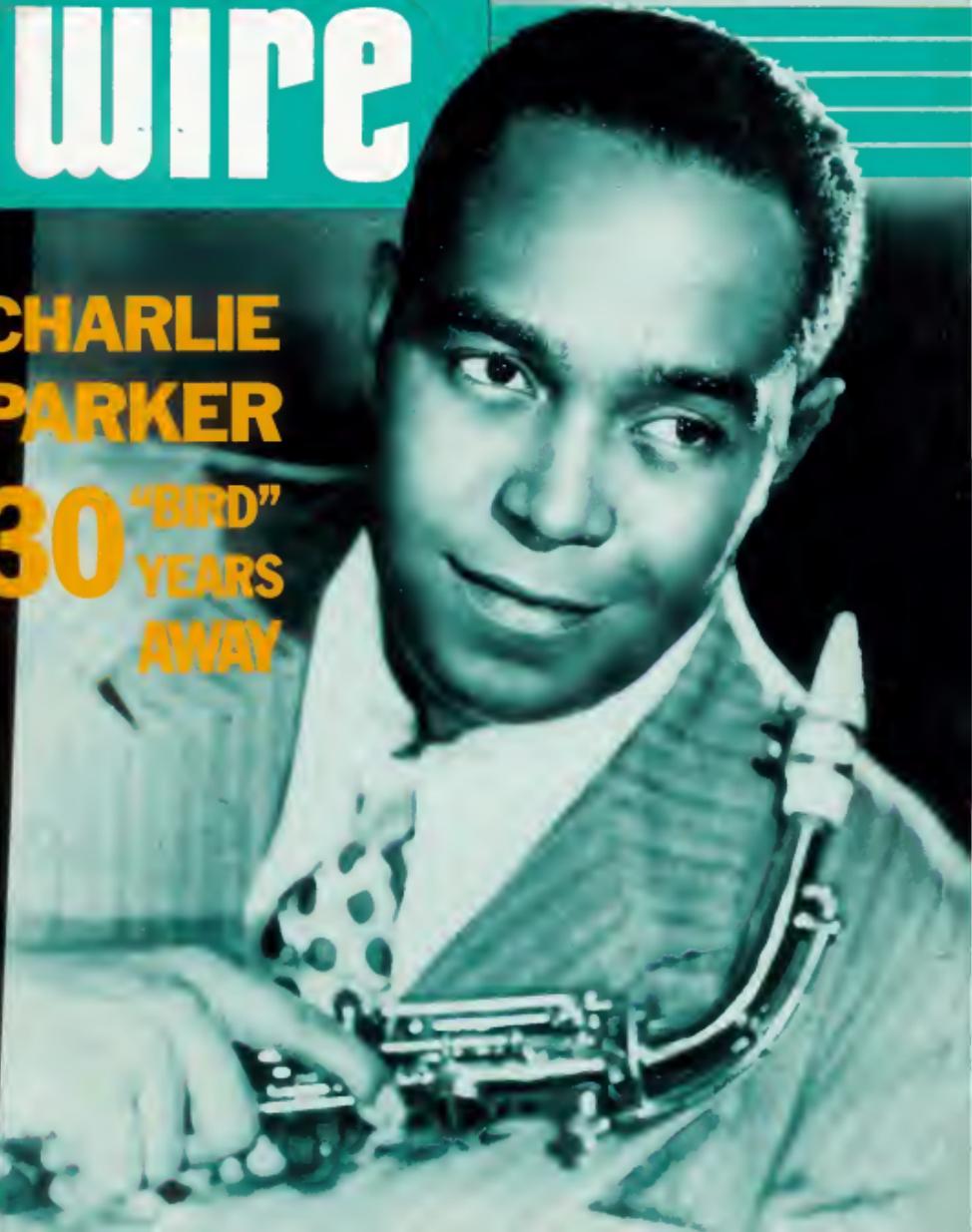
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THE

# WIRE

CHARLIE  
PARKER

30 "BIRD"  
YEARS  
AWAY



# CAMDEN JAZZ FESTIVAL '85

MONDAY, 18 MARCH – SATURDAY, 23 MARCH  
LOGAN HALL, BEDFORD WAY, LONDON WC1

MONDAY 18 MARCH 7.00 P.M.

## **GRAHAM COLLIER'S INTERNATIONAL BIG BAND**

TUES 19 MARCH 7:00 P.M.

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WED 20 MARCH 7.00 P.M.

## **WORLD SAXOPHONE QUARTET +**

# TONY OXLEY / ENRICO RAVA EUROPEAN QUINTET

**THURS 21 MARCH 7.00 P.M.**

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FRENCH HORN  
CONNECTION + 7RPM +  
JAMES NEWTON**

FBI 22 MARCH 7:00 P.M.

**JOE FARRELL/WOODY  
SHAW 5 + BOBBY  
WATSON + THE YOUNG  
LIONS**

SAT 23 MARCH 3.00 P.M.  
NATIONAL JAZZ FROM BEBOP  
TO HIP-HOP

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ABRAHAMS  
DISTRICT SIX + TOMMY  
CHASE QT +  
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**\*BOX OFFICE**  
Tickets are available from the SHAW THEATRE Box Office, 180 Euston Road, London NW1 2AJ. Tel: 01-389 1394. (Credit Card: 01-387 6293.)  
\* Doors open 6.00 Monday – Friday.

## TICKETS

**Mon 18 - Fri 22: £7, £6, £5.**  
Concession of £1 on £7 tickets  
in advance for unemployed,  
Carpend Library ticket holders  
and Friends of the National  
Jazz Centre.  
**Sat 23: £4.50/£3.50 (concessions**

as above)

Camden Jazz Week is promoted by the London Borough of Camden and the National Jazz Centre.

PHOTO OF TED CURSON BY  
JAI KILEY



# THE WIRE

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Cover photograph of Charlie Parker: THE MAX JONES COLLECTION

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# NEWSWIRED

## STARS FOR CAMDEN 1985

**THE WORLD SAXOPHONE QUARTET**, Sam Rivers, Tony Oxley, James Newton, Joe Farrell, Hermeto Pascoal, and Graham Collier head the line-up for this year's Camden Jazz Festival – 1B to 23 March, London's Logan Hall. Presented by the National Jazz Centre, in conjunction with the Camden Festival, the full line-up at press time is:

1B March – Graham Collier International Big Band performing last year's Bracknell Commission "Hoarded Dreams" plus new pieces.

19 – Hermeto Pascoal plus Sonidos de Londres.

20 – The World Saxophone Quartet plus Tony Oxley–Enrico Rava Quintet.

21 – Beaver Harris French Horn Connection featuring Sam Rivers, Dave Burrell and Candido Vincent Taylor on percussion plus Paul Roger's 7 RPM plus James Newton and a string quartet performing Billy Strayhorn arrangements.

22 – Joe Farrell–Woody Shaw Quintet plus Bobby Watson and The Young Lions plus Sal Nistico.

23 – All British Day featuring Working Week, District Six, Gail Thompson, Tommy Chase Quartet and A Drum Trio featuring John Stevens, Clifford Jarvis and Charlie Watts.

Tickets are £5, £6, £7 and a special all-day ticket will be available for Saturday. Further information – the National Jazz Centre, 01-240 2430.

Camden's All British Day with Working Week.



### INCUS 15

INCUS RECORDS, run by Derek Bailey and Evan Parker, celebrate the company's fifteenth birthday with a festival in April (Monday, 22, to Sunday, 28) at London's Arts Theatre in Great Newport Street. The programming is designed to show the various facets of the work of Bailey and Parker.

Musicians expected to take part include George Lewis, Philip Eastop, Mick Beck, Martin Altena, John Quarff, Han Bennink, Alex Schlippenbach, Paul Lovens, Ernst Reijseger, Paul Lytton, Alvin Curran and Kenny Wheeler.

The projected programme is: 22 April, Derek Bailey and Evan Parker, 23–26, Company; 27, Alex Schlippenbach Trio/Derek Bailey and Han Bennink, 28, Parker Project "Second Symposium".

The latest release from Incus is *Hook, Drift and Shuffle* (Incus 45) featuring Evan Parker, George Lewis, Barry Guy and Paul Lytton, recorded in Brussels.

For further information, phone 01-986 6904 or 01-858 4095.

### MARCH DIALS

ARTISTS this month at London's Seven Dials Jazz Club in Shelton Street, WC2, include:

7 March – Andy Rosner, Elton Dean, Harry Becker, Marcio Mattos and Verian Weston; 14 – Paul Nieman's Wonderful Elephant; 21 – Slim Gaillard, 28 – Mike Westbrook's Brass Band.

### KENNY CLARKE (1914–1985)

As we go to press we learn of the death of American drummer Kenny Clarke. In our next issue Mike Zwerin will be paying full tribute to this bebop pioneer.

### COMPANY TOUR

DEREK BAILEY is undertaking a tour this month with a five-piece Company group including George Lewis and Phil Wachsmann. Dates set at present are: 21 March, Hull; 22, Leeds; 24, Sheffield. For full details, see the advertisement in this issue.

### A LITTLE WESTBROOK (GOES A LONG WAY)

MIKE WESTBROOK'S three-piece A Little Westbrook Music, with Kate Westbrook and Chris Biscoe, strikes east this month with two dates:

1 March, Basildon – Town Gate Theatre, 2,

Norwich – Premises Arts Centre

The full Brass Band appears at London's Seven

Dials Jazz Club on the 28th.

### MORE WATSON DATES

FURTHER to last month's announcement of the national tour by ex-Blasky saxophonist Bobby Watson, the complete itinerary is now:

13 March, London – Bass Clef; 14, Manchester – Band On The Wall; 15, Cambridge – Man In The Moon; 16, Exeter – Arts Centre; 17, Birmingham – Stratford Hotel; 20, Nottingham – Old Vic Tavern, 21, Liverpool – Unity Theatre; 22, London – Camden Jazz Festival; 23, Norwich – Premises Art Centre, 24, Bradford Jazz Festival; 26, Newcastle – Corner House Hotel; 27, Sheffield – Leadmill Arts Centre; 28, Stockton – Dovecote Arts Centre.

With Watson will be Guy Barker (tp), Nick

Weldon (p), Andy Cleyndert (b), Mark Taylor (d).

### ANOTHER NEW "NEW" CLUB

RITZY PARK is the latest night spot in London to feature regular live jazz and DJ sets. Operating each Wednesday, The Ritzy Park (201–203 Wardour Street, W1) will feature a DJ for three weeks with a live group every fourth week. In the absence of any up-to-date information, we suggest ringing 01-221 0175.

### TOP HOUSE FIRST

FIRST HOUSE (Martin France, Django Bates, Ken Stubbs and Mick Hutton) – winners of last year's UF European Jazz Competition – have been invited to perform at the Molde Jazz Festival in Norway in July as well as the Montreux/Detroit/Kool Festival in September. The quartet, formed in September 1983, has its debut album released soon.

Further information from International Jazz Federation, 13 Foulsham Road, London SW17.

First House -- début album soon.



## BILL EVANS DISCOGRAPHY

A NEW discography devoted to pianist Bill Evans has been compiled and published by Peter H. Larsen in Denmark. London's Mole Jazz have copies in stock at £6.95 each.

*Turn On The Stars – Bill Evans: The Complete Discography* is published by Peter H. Larsen, 41 Lyngskraernt, DK 2840 Holte, Denmark. (price, \$11 inc postage).

## OTHER CLUB DATES

CAMBRIDGE Jazz Club (Norfolk Street) – 1 March; Jim Mullen, 8, District Six; 15, Bobby Watson; 22, Jeff Clyne Quartet, 29, Stan Sulzmann.

Leeds Jazz (Trades Club, Saville Mount) – 9 March; Annie Whitehead Sextet; 33 April, John Surman Quintet.

Southampton Jazz Society, (Joiners Arms, St Mary's Street) – 12 March, Bobby Wellens Quartet, 26, Sue Goddard Septet; 2 April, Jazz Aliens, 16, John Surman Quintet ("Solent Suite").

London – Brief's Wine Bar (34 Newington Causeway, SE1) – Marti Gilbert, Steve Watts, Steve Arguello, Pete Fairdough, Alex Dankworth, 1 March, Ian Ballamy, 7, Steve Buckley, 8, Alan Barnes, 14, Mark Lockhart, 15, David O'Higgins, 21, Ian Ballamy, 22, Steve Buckley, 28, Mark Lockhart, 29, Martin Speake.

Bobby Wellens' Jazz Club (Bognor Regis Centre – Lunchtime) – 10 March, Bobby Wellens Quartet, 17, Freddy Woods Quintet, 31, Jim Mullen.

## THE OTHER LEO

WE ALL know of Leo Records (run by Russian entrepreneur Leo Feigin) but there is another label of the same name in Finland.

To date, Leo (Finland) have released twelve albums featuring such names as Frank Foster, Tomasz Stanko, Edward Vesala, the Ethnic Heritage Ensemble and Charlie Mariano. Distribution in the UK is by Impetus (who else?) who will supply information on request. Impetus are at 587 Wardswood Road, London SW8 (01-720 4460).

## BRISTOL IMPROVISERS COLLECTIVE

FORMED five months ago, the BIC seems to have risen from the ashes of the Bristol Musicians Collective as a means of promoting improvised music in the Bristol area. Since starting, they have been encouraged by the numbers of younger people not previously aware of the music who have come to their gigs. The BIC are keen to hear from anybody interested in their activities.

Write to Bristol Improvisers Collective, c/o 133a Ashley Road, Montpellier, Bristol BS6 5NO.

## RIM

ROOM FOR IMPROVISED MUSIC, run by musicians Gerry Gold and Chris Green, continues its series in South London at new venues.

This month, RIM presents 1 March, John Stevens' Spontaneous Music Ensemble and Paul Moss, Roberto Bellatorta and Nana Tsiboe at St Matthews Meeting Place, Brixton Hill (opposite Lambeth Town Hall). On 12th, at the Nettleford Hall (near West Norwood Station), Howard Riley performs a solo piano set opposite Coherents.

All concerts start at 7.30 – admission £2 or £1. concessions

## REPERCUSSIONS FOR CHANNEL 4

REPERCUSSIONS, the video-worth series tracing the link between African music traditions and Western music, currently running on Channel 4, continues this month each Monday at 9p.m. Monday, 14 March, screens "Legends of Rhythm and Blues" featuring Big Mama Thornton and Lowell Fulson among others; 11 March is devoted to the work of Max Roach; 18, "The Drums of Dagbon"; 25, "Caribbean Crucible"; 1 April, "The Popular Music of West Africa".

The series, which took three years to make, is directed and produced by Geoffrey Haydon and Third Eye Productions.



Arthur Blythe puts sunshine in it for CBS.

## CBS – NEW SERIES

CBS are launching two series of records devoted to jazz and blues. "Jazz Masterpieces" to be introduced in June consists of fifteen albums spanning the last fifty years, each covering a theme from small groups, vocal and mainstream to bop, trumpet and fusion. In May the Blue Diamond series is available – by five very contrasting musicians: Django Reinhardt – *Swing It Lightly*; George Benson – *M's Uptown Cookbook*; Aretha Franklin – *Electrifying Soul Sister*; Billie Holiday – *Lady Day/Billie's Blues*; Robert Johnson – *King of the Delta Blues Singers Vol 1-2*.

Also this month, CBS release Arthur Blythe's latest album – *Put Sunshine in It*.

## DUNOIS LA LA

CLUB DUNOIS in Paris, long regarded as the place to hear adventurous music, is playing host to British musicians this month.

"Hacker II" (15 & 16 March) features clarinetist Alan Hacker supported by Tony Coe, Karen Evans, Carol Robinson, Violetta Ferrer and Gerard Siracusa. They'll perform works by Peter Maxwell Davies, Debussy, Alain Berg and Harrison Birtwhistle among others. The two nights are presented by NATO records with support from the British Council.

On 17 March, Miles Westbrook's A Little Westbrook Music will be guests.

You'll find the Club Dunois at 28 Rue Dunois, Paris. Admission is 50F.

Channel 4's Repercussions promises Big Mama Thornton, larger than life



## SAL NISTICO–STAN TRACEY QUINTET

SAXOPHONIST Sal Nistico, known particularly for his work with Woody Herman and Count Basie, is making a national tour with the Stan Tracey Quartet promoted by Dick Knowles and Jackie Tracey.

Dates confirmed are:

15 March, Brighton Jazz Club (NB This date with Brian Warde, Adrienne Kendon and Spike Wells), 17, Croydon, – Arthouse Gallery, Fairfield Hall (BBC recording); 18, Birmingham – Pebble Mill, TV recording; 20, London – Basie Clef (live recording for Steam Records); 21, Tewkesbury – Rose Theatre, 22, London – Camden Jazz Week (Sal Nistico and rhythm section to be announced); 23, Dorchester-Eyesmouth Hotel, 24, Frome – Merlin Theatre, 26, Leicester – Brauntown Hotel; 27, London – Bull's Head, Barnes; 28, London – Bull's Head, Barnes; 29, Darlington Arts Centre; 30, Newcastle – Corner House Hotel; 31, Derby – Albion Rooms; 1 April, London – 100 Club, 2, Witney – Sidings Club, 3, Southampton – Concord Jazz Club.

Further dates are to be confirmed. Meanwhile, Dick Knowles (with Paul Wilson) continues to present modern jazz at the 100 Club in London's Oxford Street one Monday a month. On 11 March, they present the Mike Mower Band including Martin Speake and Clark Tracey with financial support from The Musicians Union. Admission is £3.50 (£2.50 for 100 Club members and friends of the National Jazz Centre).

## RADIO ON

RADIO HALLAM covering Sheffield and South Yorkshire has moved its jazz programme "Jazz Unlimited" from Saturday to Thursday evenings between 8-10p.m.

Presented by Steve Crocker, the programme covers a mixture of jazz, blues and contemporary music. If you live in the area, Steve can be found on 194 Medium Wave and 95 2/95.9 VHF.

Down South, BBC Radio Solent's "Jazz On Solent" is into its second year. Presented by Chris Walker, the programme can be heard from Poole in the west to Farnham in the east every Thursday between 6.05 to 7p.m. on 300/221 Medium Wave, 96.1 VHF.

In London, The Wire's own Brian Priestley can be heard every Saturday morning between 10 and 11.30a.m. on BBC Radio London on 206 Medium Wave, 94.9 VHF.

## BLAKE'S STREAMS

THIRD-STREAM pianist and improviser Ran Blake comes to Europe this month to perform at the Grenoble Jazz Festival in France – 7–16 March. On returning to the States, Blake will play several concerts during March, April and May including one on 5 May at the New England Conservatory of Music in Boston where he is Chairperson of Third Stream Studies.

## NYJO 20

THE NATIONAL YOUTH JAZZ ORCHESTRA under their director Bill Ashton celebrate their twentieth anniversary this year and to mark the event are taking part in several special events. During April NYJO will be recording with John Dankworth and on 17 June, as part of the South Bank Festival, they will perform at London's Queen Elizabeth Hall. Other events are being finalised.

NYJO dates for March are:

8 March, Liverpool - Playhouse; 10, Harrow - Rayner's Hotel; 17, Mold - Theatre Chwyd; 22, Wimborne, Dorset - Canford School, 29, Wembley - Brent Town Hall.

## BILL DIXON

A LIMITED edition album devoted to the work of trumpeter Bill Dixon is released this month by Cadence Records. Collections, a double-album set with accompanying booklet, is published in limited edition of 500 numbered copies.

Bill Dixon was one of the leaders of the Sixties' avant-garde movement, working and recording with Archie Shepp and Cecil Taylor among others. In 1967, RCA released *Intents and Purposes*, widely regarded as an outstanding record. After a long period of self-imposed exile from public performance in the Seventies, he made two European tours in 1979-80 appearing in London on Actual B0. Several albums of new material are available on the Soul Note Label, while Fore (another Italian label) has released two double albums of material recorded during his period as Director of Black Studies at Bennington College.

Collection is available from Cadence Jazz Records, Cadence Building, Redwood, New York, NY 13679 - price \$40. An appraisal of Bill Dixon is planned for a future issue of *The Wire*.

## Bill Dixon's Collections — highly prized items.



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## Ray's Jazz Shop

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London WC2H 8JS  
Tel: 01-240 3969

## THE PAT SMYTHE MEMORIAL TRUST

SINCE the death of pianist-composer Pat Smythe in 1983, a trust fund commemorating his name has been established as a registered charity. The object of the trust will be to award an annual bursary to a young jazz musician showing exceptional talent.

The nucleus of the funds for the trust came from a benefit concert held for Pat at London's 100 Club, where many musicians showed their affection and regard for him by giving their services free. The proceeds were given to Pat in hospital but, sadly, he died before the money could be of use to him. With the agreement of Pat's family, it was decided that the money should be returned to the music community in some way that would commemorate his life and music. Since Pat was well known for his support and encouragement of young musicians, the idea for this kind of award was felt to be particularly appropriate. Further funds for the trust were raised at a memorial concert at University College School Theatre and contributions have been made by the BBC Radio Orchestra, the Smythe family, Pizza Express and several individuals. The first award will be presented towards the end of this year and further fund-raising events will add to the capital.

Although such trust funds are common in classical music, the Pat Smythe Memorial Trust is thought to be the first of its kind in memory of a British jazz musician.

Further information from Mary Greig - 01-602 1329.



## CODA RECORDS

COMPACT & CONTEMPORARY MUSIC CATALOGUE



A.O.O.  
MICHAEL HEALEY, DAVE ROACH, CLARE HAMEL, JOHN CRITCHLOW,  
JOHN THOMAS, CATHERINE MURDOCH, ETC.

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CODA RECORDS 17 ALMA ROAD, WANDSWORTH, LONDON SW11.

**BIX AND PIECES** . . . The three words "The Beiderbecke Affair" in black on a blue invitation ticket for Ronnie Scott's Club set the heart pounding somewhat one day last December. "Preview of episodes 1 and 3" and "live music" were promised, almost confirming that here was a hitherto secret project about the legend from Davenport, Iowa. A dramatisation of Dick Sudhalter's book, maybe? Examination of the accompanying press release from Yorkshire Television, who organised the preview, brought the ever-hopeful jazz heart beating back to normal: "An elusive set of records by the legendary jazz musician Bix Beiderbecke draws two schoolteachers into an intriguing mystery . . .".

The mystery concerning Bix's involvement was solved at Ronnie's where it was revealed that Yorkshire Television's Sunday-night serial, which began on 6 January, was the work of formidable TV, film and theatre writer Alan Plater, seemingly a dead-keen jazz fan. As *The Wire* reader-viewers may have found out for themselves by now the hero of the piece is a teacher who is also a dead-keen jazz fan and not just Bix either. The names roll off his tongue, even Toshiko Akiyoshi (that's some rollin'!). When he mentions Wynton Marsalis to his girl-friend (very un-hip), she blithely replies "Sounds like a cheap Spanish wine."

Keen-eyed viewers of the opening episode will have spotted in the hero's record-filled room a poster for a well-known, long-established British jazz magazine. But main interest for jazzers is the music, in the Bix and Trumbauers' idiom, composed by Frank Ricotti, featuring Kenny Baker. Devotees of Bix's music will have noted the inclusion of Trumbauer's "Cryin' all Day". Other titles given to the various snatches of music include "Bix and Pieces" and "Tiger Jive". Among the nine-piece band who performed some of the music at Ronnie's and who are on the sound track were Allan Ganley, Don Lusher, Roy Willow and Stan Sulzman with Dave Willis puffing away on the Adrian Rollini instrument, bass saxophone. The TV company gave the press two flexi-discs of "Cryin' all Day" and "Tiger Jive". Printed as being 33 1/2 rpm, they are in fact 45. Bix music, even out of Ricotti, at the wrong speed is not recommended, even for the citizens of Fleet Street. *The Wire* readers, who have something better to do on Sunday nights than watch TV, can read what they missed in the Methuen paperback version, now out, which contains Alan Plater's dedication "For Bix".

"**WHATEVER HAPPENED TO?** DEPT . . . Sun House — the last of the great line of Mississippi blues singers — did not split from his mortal coil in the Seventies as some of us thought but is alive and well and in retirement in Michigan. Although no longer playing, Eddie would love to hear from anybody who feels like writing. His address is: 14201 2nd Avenue Apt. 518, Highland Park, Michigan 48203, USA.

Son House — a living legend.



# SHORT STRANDS

## SOARING DOLLAR HITS JAZZ

THE CURRENT RAPID climb of the American dollar against other currencies is going to affect jazz greatly in the months to come.

In Britain and right across Europe, promoters and record distributors are bracing themselves for a wave of mounting costs for American imports — musicians and records.

Promoters like Gabby Kleinschmidt from Germany who organises European tours for top Americans are in the front line. She feels that musicians don't understand the problems caused by the present crisis — promoters have to pay for Americans in dollars. She cites one case of a group wanting \$10,000 per concert (now almost £10,000). Nobody could afford that much so the gig didn't happen.

Like Gabby, Brian Theobald brings over many American acts. Last year, he toured the Buddy Rich Band here and he feels the American rock scene, unlike jazz, is much more realistic and flexible when negotiating European tours, though it has to be said that rock is much more reliant on the record market for its living.

Like everyone else, John Cumming — who promotes both the Camden and Bracknell Festivals — is worried about the effect rocketing fees will have on future programming. Last year's Bracknell budget increased by £1000 in two months, solely because of the changing exchange rate. Festival promoters like John are caught between two problems — the rising cost of musicians' fees and the cutback in grants from funding bodies. There is a real danger that festivals like Bracknell could go under (Bradford Festival is already a victim).

Record imports are also in for a rough ride with prices likely to hit £9 or even £10. Graham Griffiths from London's Mole Jazz, who import several labels direct from the States, reckons they will be ordering less in future as many people will think twice before forking out ten quid. Import Music Service, on the other hand, are getting round the problem by having American labels pressed in Europe. Judy Reynolds, Press Officer at IMS, says that both Pablo and Gramavision are already pressed in Germany. Future Concord releases will also come from Germany extending later to certain back-catalogue items.

So, we can expect fewer big names and fewer and more expensive imported records. Perhaps the one positive aspect is that the gaps in events left by Americans could give much-needed playing opportunities to our own major musicians. We await with interest.

**MORE THAN TWO'S FOR COMPANY** . . . Just when you thought there were no takers for improvised music any more, you walk into Bethnal Green Music Library on a cold Saturday afternoon and find scores of studious faces packed wall-to-wall listening to Derek Bailey, Kenny Wheeler and Tony Cox doing what comes naturally.

But where's the hundreds-of-pounds-worth of publicity needed to draw such a crowd? The ads in the media? The posters in prominent record shops? Answer — a humble leaflet lying on shop counters. Is that it?

Well, not quite. A picture of Tony Cox accompanied by some words of wisdom from David Ilic in London listings magazine City Limits, but, not only that (pause for breath), a snap of Mr Wheeler in CL's rival publication *Time Out* with an anonymous line, (Jazz is lucky to get that in Time Out these days.)

What does it all mean? Not a lot, just makes you feel good in all this doom. The music was great, no fuss or long debates about who's playing next — straight on with it. Oh, that others would get the message, the word is professionalism even in Bethnal Green Music Library on a winter's afternoon.

**GREAT JAZZ TYPOS:** (1) **FAST WALLER** . . . Thomas "Fast" Waller is credited with composing one of the tunes on the Cab Calloway re-issue (MCA 1344).

Fast Waller was born in Chicago? Yes, Tks., in 1929. Three days later he graduated with honours from the Juilliard School of Music and recorded his first piano solos. These performances were so fast that they could not be issued until the advent of 33 rpm records some twenty years later. Unfortunately, these solos also turned out to be his last recordings, since he died from malnutrition the following day, aged 53. He was given his nickname, "Fast", because he never ate anything.

**"CHARITY" BEGINS AT HOME?** . . . While artists and audience were doing their bit for the starving Ethiopians at the big gig at Brixton's Academy in January, there were others with a less-than-charitable attitude. Freelance photographer David Corio — on assignment at the Academy — was attacked, robbed and then killed in the loo while the gig was in progress.

So much for "Love and Peace, Brother".

IMS IMS

## Latest Releases from IMS...

### VERVE

**STAN GETZ/Getz Au Go Go**  
A classic live debut performance of the then new Stan Getz Quartet.  
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2304173

### PABLO

**INFORMAN GRANZ' JAZZ AT THE PHILHARMONIC 1953**  
This album is from a concert recorded in 1953 at Hartford Bushnell Memorial Auditorium.  
Previously unreleased music by Duke Ellington/Billie Holiday/Billie Webster/Gene Krupa/Oscar Peterson Quartet/Lester Young Quartet

2308240  
K 08240 mc

**STEPHANE GRAPPELLI / STUFF SMITH/ Violins No End**  
Personnel: Stephane Grappelli/Stuff Smith/Oscar Peterson/Ray Brown/Joe Jones Recorded Paris, 1957

2310907  
K 10907 mc

**JOE PASS & J.J. JOHNSON/We'll Be Together Again**  
Partnership between two great musicians. Recorded October 1983

2310911  
K 10911 mc

**MILT JACKSON QUARTET/I'll Open My Arms If You Can't Tap Your Foot To It**  
Personnel: Milt Jackson/Ray Brown/Cedar Walton/Red Garland Recorded New York, July 1984

2310909  
K 10909 mc

**RAY CHARLES/The Fantastic Ray Charles**  
A collection of blues and ballads offering interesting insights into the early works.  
Personnel includes: Teddy Buckner/Marshall Royal and Rudy Pitts

ALB 103

**DUTCH SWING COLLEGE BAND/Marching In**  
Another compilation LP to coincide with their March tour.

6375424  
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# ON THE WIRE

## Against The Grain

A personal opinion by Kenneth Ansell

EVERY YEAR they raise their ugly heads. They manifest themselves not only in the music press and other genre publications but also as an indulgence of Arts trade bodies as well as in industry and sport. In the intensely and inherently competitive worlds of sports and industry they may have some tenuous claim to stake but they seem singularly inappropriate to the Arts. They pander to the common competitive instincts against which the Arts surely represent a bulwark.

I refer, of course, to the annual polls and awards whose sole function is to single out individuals, groups or artefacts and state categorically that they are the best, the finest. And to do so at the expense of all the others who have contributed to the genre under debate.

Yet this year, for the first time, we found them taking a place in *The Wire* (February 1985).

The mechanism of the poll is fundamentally suspect. It is common knowledge, for instance, that in allocating Oscars the prevailing political climate, and its relationship with the subject matter of a film, has as much to do with the selection or neglect of a particular film as the standards of excellence achieved.

But even if we consider our polls – such as the one in *The Wire* – to be above such obvious chicanery, there remain intrinsic shortcomings in any system of polling, whether it revolves around readers or writers.

The breadth of any participant's poll return, for instance, is crucially determined by breadth of their listening experience. It is obviously physically impossible to listen to every record made available to the public, much less apply the appropriate degree of concentration to each. And how much more so, to attend every gig or concert.

Already the choices available to those completing their poll returns have excluded an extraordinarily high percentage of contenders for the final seal of approval – the vote or nomination. That exclusion has nothing to do with merit, it is a product of the overwhelming wealth of material available and the natural, essential selectivity on the part of the listener (which, in turn, tends to favour links with established personal tastes).

In addition, so much of our experience of music these days is through the medium of recordings. However, not many musicians – if any – have open access to recording and production. It can be a very expensive process, especially without record company support and, as a consequence, many musicians are unrepresented on vinyl, or have long delays between releases. Inactivity on the recording front does not necessarily mean that a particular musician is not making important musical advances, much less not making music at all.

However, recordings are often the only means of access to the work of musicians who visit infrequently and only play a handful of concerts when they do. But the recording medium can be a poor indicator of a musician's expressive skill or instrumental ability (although it can reflect a musician's creativity and dexterity in the use of the recording medium) offering sophisticated electronic manipulation of the sounds produced, the mechanical restructuring of music through tape editing and multi-track recording and, most importantly, the opportunity to select exactly which music passes into the public domain.

To compare a musician's performance on record with another's live work is to compare two very different creatures, limited and formed by very different constraints.

Even to restrict comparisons to the live sphere is to court unintentional prejudice. The individual's response to any musician's playing is a very subjective concern, one governed not only by the performance itself but also by any number of unrelated factors which surround the music-making.

To outline an extreme example, how would it be possible to assess fairly the comparative merits of performances witnessed under the following conditions?

On the one hand, you arrive by taxi at a comfortable jazz club on a balmy summer's evening. The club is air-conditioned and you enjoy a good meal and a few drinks (perhaps a record company is picking up the bill as part of its promotional budget). Feeling suitably content you settle back to enjoy the music...

On the other hand, you alight at a grim underground station on a bitterly cold November evening to walk the last mile to the venue in the driving rain. You arrive soaked to the skin and the minimal heating has done little to raise the temperature of the bare room where the performance will take place above that experienced outside. You've got a cold coming on and a headache, the bar is in a pub across the road and the toilet facilities obscure. Shivering, you await the music...

Nevertheless, the readers or writers participating in the poll are expected to instigate a process of selection, of advocating one individual, group or recording at the expense of others, purely on the grounds of those few acquaintances they have had during the course of the year.

Writers', or critics', polls such as we witnessed in *The Wire* last month are presumably supposed to be a somewhat more informed affair. After all, the writers involved devote a high proportion of their time to the music and advocacy of it. However, writers (and I do not exempt myself from their number) have been notoriously inept when it comes to recognising important developments as they happen, although they do their best. You need only to look to the earliest dismissive writings on Parker or Coleman to confirm this point. Any annual poll will thus inevitably fail to reflect the importance of new movements, trends and developments as they happen, much less identify the relative importance of musicians within them.

All these factors coalesce to undermine the efficiency with which a poll can be administered and the results given any degree of credence.

Yet there is another – and, I believe, more crucial – aspect to these polls. By their very nature they are at loggerheads with the intention of the jazz and improvised music which magazines such as *The Wire* purport to support and advocate. Jazz and improvised music has always been concerned with the co-operative generation of music. Time and again musicians have stressed that it is the music they make together, and the interaction between them, which makes this music special.

In singling out a handful of musicians for individual glory we ignore their protestations; in doing so, it is as if we seek deliberately to misinterpret the basic principles on which they have built their music. Or, perhaps, our understanding of the basic tenets of their music-making is stunted and wholly undeveloped and we are left only able to respond to the surface features – the undeniable virtuosity of a small circle of exponents.

It is time to face up to the facts: the mechanics of the polls render them little more than arbitrary while their intentions render them wholly inappropriate to jazz and improvised music.

# LIVE WIRE

**THE STOCKHAUSEN CONCERTS –  
“ORDER & DISORDER”, “ALCHEMY & ELECTRICITY”, “MUSIC & MACHINES”  
Barbican Centre, London: 8–16 January, 1985**

**Max Harrison looks back over the most extensive event mounted in Britain to honour one of modern music's most influential composers, KARLHEINZ STOCKHAUSEN.**

PERHAPS for some readers of *The Wire* anything which happened as long ago as 1951 belongs to prehistory. But a search through old diaries indicates that was the year I became aware of the man in question, at the Darmstadt International Vacation Courses for Contemporary Music, then the chief annual meeting-place of the European avant-garde. The Composition Seminar was supposedly to be given by Schoenberg, a quite excessively exciting prospect (obviously one was much younger then) but the great man was ill and, in fact, died that summer. It was taken instead by Theodor Wiesengrund Adorno, a former pupil of Berg, a prominent member of the Frankfurt School of philosophers, and was not an unqualified success.

Considerable disturbances centred round a Sonata for Two Pianos by Karel Goeyvaerts, parts of which were performed by the composer and one Karlheinz Stockhausen. Written before Stockhausen's Kreuzspiel and finished before Boulez's *Polyphonie X*, this piece was of crucial importance in laying the foundations of total serialism (the serialisation of all parameters, not just pitches). Goeyvaerts, a Dutchman, had been a pupil of Milhaud and Messiaen, and had in the Sonata acted on some quite drastic conclusions drawn from an analysis of the Variations Op.27 (1935–36) of Webern, whose music was only then becoming known to most of us. Stockhausen was greatly struck by the Sonata, which Goeyvaerts analysed. Adorno, however, apparently found it disturbing, kept asking what this new music "meant", and was repeatedly referred back to the underlying serial structure which, besides minutely calculated dynamics and durations, involves a method whereby the registral placements of each note are gradually narrowed towards the centre of the keyboards and then extended outwards again. Finally exasperated, Adorno, who lately had acted as Thomas Mann's musical adviser for *Doktor Faustus*, dismissed Goeyvaerts and Stockhausen as "Leverkuhn and his famulus".

Stockhausen had been born at Burg Modrath, a village near Cologne, in 1928. Orphaned by the Second World War, he had pursued his higher education under difficult conditions. During his time at the Cologne Hochschule für Musik he earned his living as a pianist in light music and jazz but earlier worked as a farmhand, a stretcher-bearer, a dancing instructor's pianist etc. At Cologne he studied with, among others, the distinguished Swiss composer Frank Martin, working concurrently on philosophy, musicology and philology at Cologne University. Surviving compositions from this time reflect his intense study of contemporary masters, above all – and this shows his youthful acumen – Schoenberg, Bartók and Stravinsky. Notable here are the *Drei Lieder* (see discography) which were rejected by Darmstadt in 1952 as "too conservative"! By then, however, this inept decision was merely a good joke for, at Darmstadt in 1951, Stockhausen had sensed

his true direction.

Underlying the serial structure of Goeyvaerts's Sonata was a theological idea that music should only exist as the projection of a metaphysical datum, reflecting a perfectly balanced Divine Creation in which all elements are equally present in ever-new combinations. This concept has echoed through Stockhausen's music ever since and is at the root of many of his ideas, yet at Darmstadt in 1951 he had a still more immediately formative experience. The French critic Antoine Goléa took along a recording of Messiaen's *Mode de valeurs et d'intensités*, second of the *Quatre Études de Rythme* (1949–50). This is composed entirely of 36 notes divided into three 12-tone sets each of which has a specific duration, intensity of attack and dynamic level associated with each of its pitches. A widely influential piece (on Boulez's *Structures I*, for example), it fascinated Stockhausen who at once grasped the significance of its method in relation to Goeyvaerts's Sonata. Two months later he had completed Kreuzspiel, a minor classic of the music of the early Fifties, and two months after that he was in Paris studying with Messiaen.

From that point on Stockhausen's development has been rapid and almost continuous and it is impossible in this short article to give even an outline (but see the bibliography). During his 14 months with Messiaen he also frequented the musique concrete studio of French Radio, where he made an intensive analytical study of the nature of sound which had momentous consequences when he worked at the newly founded electronic music studio of West German Radio at Cologne. There he composed his *Elektronische Studien I* and II (1953–54) and, at this point, the story is taken up by the recent Stockhausen concerts. As he explained to *The Times* (3 January), this virtual festival "was Anthony Sargent's idea at the BBC. The original plan was to perform *Momente*, but that alone would have needed six weeks of rehearsal, and neither I nor Peter Eötvös, who conducts the two orchestral concerts, had the time. So we're doing other works of that period".

The two *Studien* were included in the second concert (9 January), and although their historical significance is uncontested, they now sound monochrome in comparison with what happened next, like old films, as Stockhausen admitted, "in which it's raining all the time". During 1953–56 he studied communications theory and phonetics with Werner Meyer-Eppler at Bonn University and, as some of the *Klavierstücke* show, he arrived at certain conclusions as to what constituted the essential differences, from the composer's viewpoint, between instrumental and electronic music. This was followed by the production of his first masterworks in each field, *Zeitmasze* for woodwind quintet and *Gesang der Jünglinge* (both 1955–56). The latter was the piece which finally convinced



Karlheinz Stockhausen at the Barbican.

some of us that we were going to have to take electronic music seriously; it was included in the same Barbican programme as the *Studien* and there could have been no more vivid demonstration of the leap forward taken by this medium in those years.

One important innovation was that *Gesang der Jünglinge* was composed for five loudspeakers, so the music issues from spatially separated points, movement of the sounds between which forms an integral part of the work. The texture is made up of infinite transformations of a boy's voice, of processed abstractions from vowel sounds and consonants – a human language phonetically transmuted to mathematics; and of pure electronic sounds in which there is no human intrusion at all. Human language is disintegrated into its component noises, and the non-human electronic sounds appear inimical, destroying communication, almost. Yet, as Stockhausen said in his lucid introductory remarks, the degree of comprehensibility is carefully managed and when the words do emerge they prove to be an act of praise, sung by the Men in the Fiery Furnace (*Daniel 3: 19–26*). Scattered stereophonically between the loudspeakers, the electronic sounds grow faster and fiercer while the voice of the child, multiplied into that of many children, grows fainter and more forlorn. Yet it is not obliterated. The breaking up of human language into phonetics and its identity with mathematical abstraction becomes an affirmation: from its awareness of disintegration, this music praises God.

When he composed *Gesang der Jünglinge* Stockhausen was formally a Roman Catholic. Later he renounced the church, yet he remains a mystical composer in that, like Messiaen, he seeks "alchemically" to transmute the material of sound. The transmutation analogy is exact and he has continued to use electronic means to change the quality of sound matter itself (the Barbican series might therefore better have been titled "Music and Electricity"). Most of the works heard at these concerts in various ways fused "live" with electronic sounds, the latter being generated in several ways. Heard at the opening concert (8 January) in two versions, *Mixtur* (1964) was one instance. For this, members of the BBC Symphony Orchestra were divided into four groups – bowed strings, plucked strings, woodwind, brass, plus an independent percussion group. The music of each is fed into a ring modulator, where its transformation by the carefully

specified pitches of a sine-wave generator (one for each group) produces new, because otherwise unobtainable, sounds which are projected in "real time" via the several loudspeaker groups.

Last performed in London a dozen years ago by Boulez, *Mixtur* then sounded like a mis-turned radio broadcast or, at best, a sketch of how orchestral sounds could be contorted by electronics. This recent performance, however, using the 1967 version for large chamber orchestra, revealed the score as one of great beauty and elegance, partly because Peter Eötvös's conducting was more relaxed and generous to the work in phrasing and tempos, partly because the players have learnt how to play it, partly because we have learnt how to listen to it. *Mixtur* consists of twenty "moments", each sharply characterised in terms of instrumentation, register, dynamics, rhythmic structure. In the second performance these were played in reverse order. Between the two versions Bernhard Wambsgauß gave a lengthened yet densely concentrated account of *Klavierstück X* with the sound projection managed by Stockhausen himself. Just as intelligibility ebbs and flows in *Gesang der Jünglinge* so this music mediates between order and disorder. By cutting off the upper partials amplification made *Klavierstück X* seem less exaggeratedly aggressive while at the same time allowing us to hear how the performer's frantic keyboard activity produces the most ethereal and fading resonances.

A different yet related concept is that of *Telemusik* (1966), heard on 10 January, the most daring of Stockhausen's integrative ventures of the Sixties – at least prior to *Hymnen*. *Telemusik* was composed in the electronic music studio of Japanese Radio and brings together recordings of folk and traditional forms of music-making which represent not only different cultures but also different periods of history. In a sense it achieves a fusion of the techniques of music-concrete and electronic music but it is no mere collage; the electronic procedures used are highly sophisticated and most of the sounds are Stockhausen's own. It refers back to the concept embodied in Goeyvaerts's *Sonata* of a music in which "all elements are equally present in ever-new combinations". It also reaches towards the idea of "world music", wherein all cultures are intermodulated, forming a single "song of the Earth". In comparison, Schullerian, or even Blakean, "third stream" initiatives appear exceedingly simple (though none the worse for that).

The approach was taken considerably further in *Hymnen* (1966–67) which lasts about two hours and filled the three-part concert that brought the series to an end (16 January). Here the musical "found objects" include a large assortment of national anthems. These Stockhausen considers to be as symbolic as the folksongs of *Telemusik*, although the ascendancy of process ("how") over material ("what") continues. This is fortunate, for, aside from inspired melodies by Haydn and Rouget de Lisle, these anthems include some of the most banal tunes that can be discovered outside the world of rock. The original version was for tape alone and an abbreviated orchestral score was made in 1969. At the Barbican, though, we heard the version with live soloists, these including Stockhausen's sons Markus (trumpet and synthesiser) and Simon (saxophones and synthesiser). There is no room here, alas, to describe, still less analyse, this great work but the final, apocalyptic climax should be mentioned. This is an avalanche of slowly de-

scending glissandos which produced a quite shattering effect and seemed an entirely suitable end to these concerts.

Earlier we had visited several other peaks which likewise deserve full discussion, particularly *Kontakte* (9 January), *Mantra* (11 January) and *Stimmung* (12 January). More should have been said, also, about the performances, for others besides the one of *Mixtur* showed the music in a new and better light. Two instances were Michael Vetter's of *Spiral* and Michael Barker's of *Solo* (both 10 January), neither of which had seemed to me a successful piece on previous occasions. I did not enjoy Singcircle's performance of the raptly meditative *Stimmung* so much as the recording by the Cologne Collegium Vocale listed in the discography but the pianists Antonio Ballista and Bruno Canino gave a superlative account of *Mantra*.

Mainly these programmes illustrated Stockhausen's activities in the Sixties. This explains – quite apart from problems over rehearsal time – the absence of Fifties masterpieces such as *Gruppen* for three orchestras, *Carre* for four orchestras and four choruses, and *Zeitmasze*, along with such regrettable omissions from the Sixties themselves as *Microphonie I* and above all *Momente*. But the six evenings still made, of course, an unforgettable event, reaffirming Stockhausen's position as one of the major figures in the music of the second half of our century. Their impact was notably increased by attendance at the morning rehearsals: with little other music is it quite so instructive to hear works being taken to pieces and put together again.

There were helped, too, by Stockhausen's lecture on the opening day, after which he answered questions. There were two films of earlier lectures of his, one about *Telemusik*, one called "Musical Forming", and a screening of Barrie Gavin's *Tuning In* – a filmed exploration of Stockhausen's world that you might have seen on the BBC *Omnibus* series in 1979. Considering how "difficult" this music is supposed to be, attendances were encouragingly large, response highly enthusiastic. There were fair numbers of visitors from Western Europe but the main audience consisted of the musical brains of London – an assemblage as interesting to study for those who were not present as for those who were.

Markus Stockhausen plays *Karlheinz Stockhausen*.



#### Minimal Listening Assignment

It will be found advantageous to approach Stockhausen's works in as near as possible the order given here. The dates are those of composition.

*Chor für Doris*, Deutsche Grammophon  
Choral (both 1950) – DG 2530 641.

*Drei Lieder* (1950), Violin

*Sonatina* (1951) – DG 2530 827.

*Kreuzspiel* (1951) – DG 2530 443.

*Formel* (1951) – DG 2707 111 (2 LPs).

*Spiel* (1952), *Schlagatrio* (1952, revised 1974) – DG 2530 827.

*Punkte* (1952) – DG 2530 641.

*Kontra-Punkte* (1952) London Sinfonietta/Stockhausen – DG 2530 443; compare this with the performance by Domaine Musicale/Boulez – Vega C30 A66.

*Elektronische Studien I, II*

(1953–54) – DG LP 16133.

*Klavierstücke I–XI*

(1952–61) – CBS 72591/2 (2 LPs).

*Zeitmasze* (1955–56) London Sinfonietta/Stockhausen – DG 2530 443; compare this with the performance by Domaine Musicale/Boulez – Vega C30 A139.

*Gesang der Jünglinge*

(1955–56) – DG 13B 811.

*Gruppen* (1955–57) – DG 137 002.

*Zyklus* (1959) Christoph Caskel and Max Neuhaus (2 versions) – Wergo 600 10; compare this with Sumire Yoshihara and Tristan Fry (2 versions) – RCA RDC1.

*Refrain* (1959), *Kontakte*

(1959–60) – Vox STGBY63B.

*Carre* (1959–60) – DG 137 002.

*Momente* (1961–64) – DG 2707 055 (3 LPs).

*Microphonie I* (1964),

*Microphonie II* (1965) – CBS 72647.

*Mixtur* (1964) – DG 137 012.

*Stop* (1965, revised 1973) – DG 2530 442.

*Solo* (1965–66) – DG 137 005.

*Telemusik* (1966) – DG 137 012.

*Adieu* (1966) – DG 2530 443.

*Hymnen* (1966–67) – DG 2707 039 (2 LPs).

*Prozession* (1967) – Vox STGBY615; compare this with the 1971 version – DG 2530 582.

*Ensemble* (1967) – Wergo 600 65.

*Stimmung* (1968) – DG 2543 003.

*Kurzwellen* (1968) – DG 2707 045 (2 LPs).

2 versions –

*Aus den sieben Tagen* (1968) – DG 2730 073 (7 LPs).

*Pole* (1969–70), *Spiral* (1969) (2 versions) – EMI/Electrola

*Mantra* (1969–70) – DG 2530 208.

*Sternklang* (1971) – DG 2707 123 (2 LPs).

*Trans* (1971) – DG 2530 726.

*Am Himmel wandre ich* (1972) – DG 2530 876.

... (1972) – DG 2530 442.

*Ylem* (1972) – DG 2530 442.

*Atmen gibt das Leben* (1974) – DG 2530 641.

*Musik im Bauch*, *Tierkreis* (both 1975) – DG 2530 913.

*Harlekin, Der kleine* Harlekin (both 1975) – DG 2530 006.

*Sirius* (1975–77) – DG 2702 112 (2 LPs).

*Der Jahreslauf* (from "Licht") (1977) – DG 2531 358.

*Donnerstag* (from "Licht") (1978) – DG 2740 272 (2 LPs).

#### Selected Further Reading

Most of Stockhausen's own writings are published by DuMont Schauberg (Cologne, 1963–74) in four volumes of *Texte*. A fifth volume is planned for later this year that will include an expansion of the bibliography by Christoph von Blümröder and Herbert Henck which appeared in *Neuland 3* (Cologne,

1983). Most of this material is unfortunately not yet available in English but the following translations should be noted.

- "Actualia" in *Die Reihe* (1958), No. 1.
- "... how time passes ..." in *Die Reihe* (1959), No. 3.
- "Electronic and Instrumental Music" and "Music in Space" in *Die Reihe* (1961), No. 5.
- "The Concept of Unity in Electronic Music" in *Perspectives in New Music* (1962), iii.
- "Music and Speech" in *Die Reihe* (1964), No. 6.
- "Stockhausen Miscellany" in *Music and Musicians* (1972), xxi/2.
- "Proposals for the Future of the Orchestra" in *The Listener* (1974), xc.

#### Books

- R. Gehhaar: *Zur Komposition Ensemble* (Mainz, 1968).
- K. Werner: *Stockhausen - His Life and Work* (London, 1973).
- J. Cott: *Stockhausen - Conversations with the Composer* (London, 1974).
- R. Macomie: *The Works of Karlheinz Stockhausen* (London, 1975).
- J. Harvey: *The Music of Stockhausen* (London, 1975).
- H. Henck: *Stockhausen's Klavierstück X - a Contribution Toward Understanding Serial Technique* (Cologne, 1980).
- H. Sabbe: *Karlheinz Stockhausen ... wie die Zeit verging ...* (Munich, 1981).

#### Essays

- (An extremely small selection from a vast literature)
- C. Cardew: "Report on Stockhausen's Carré" in *Musical Times* (1961), ci.
- B. McElheran: "Preparing Stockhausen's *Momente*" in *Perspectives in New Music* (1965), i/i.
- R. Smalley: "Stockhausen's Gruppen" in *Musical Times* (1967), cviii.
- H. Davies: "Working with Stockhausen" in *Composer* (1968), No. 27.
- M. Harrison: "Stockhausen's Hymnen" in *The Gramophone* (1969), xcvi.
- R. Smalley: "Stockhausen's Klavierstücke" in *Musical Times* (1969), cx.
- R. Macomie: "Stockhausen's Setz die Siegel zur Sonne" in *Tempo* (1970), No. 92.
- R. Smalley: "Stockhausen and Development" in *Musical Times* (1970), cx.
- P. Heyworth: "Spiritual Dimensions" in *Musik und Musicians* (1971), xi/9.
- R. Macomie: "Stockhausen's Microphonie I" in *Perspectives in New Music* (1972), x/2.
- J. Purce: "The Spiral in the Music of Stockhausen" in *Main Currents in Modern Thought* (1973), xxx.
- J. Harvey: "Stockhausen's Hymnen" in *Musical Times* (1975), cxvi.
- R.P. Morgan: "Stockhausen's Writings on Music" in *Musical Quarterly* (1975), lxi.
- R. Toop: "Stockhausen's Konkrete Etude" in *Music Review* (1976), xxvii.
- G.W. Hopkins: entry on Stockhausen in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music* Vol. 18 (London, 1980).

## THESSALONIKI FESTIVAL

Greece: 25 November-9 December, 1984

**Steve Lake looks at Floros Florides' Herculean struggle to establish an improvised music scene in the shadow of Mount Olympus, without incurring the wrath of the Greek gods.**

ON A clear day you can see ... well, not for ever, but Mount Olympus. Which is just as good and particularly impressive at sunset, rising, inky black, out of a blood-red sky and seascape. Gods onceickered in its shadow, Thetis and Hera bitching over the various merits of Achilles.

Floros Florides was also bitching a lot. Railing against the universe. Cursing bureaucracy, Greek apathy and railway timetables.

Organise a jazz festival? Sooner chain me to a rock, upside down, with vultures nibbling the liver. Florides, who plays reeds by the way, was thirty-two years old when the first bands began arriving for his festival, and infinitely older and wiser when the last musicians left more than two weeks later. By this point, the bags beneath his eyes looked from a distance, like sunglasses.

Could he have known what he was in for when he first lobbied the local council to divert some of their arts funding into an improvisers' symposium? A positive answer would imply more than a measure of masochism. Self-flagellation comes with the job for the jazz musician; he need not go looking for more.

Talk about a one-man show. Floros not only booked the groups, and introduced them from the stage (that was the easy part of the gig), he also transported them to and from the airport and the station at all hours of day and night, fought the council to demonstrate that despite appearances this was a jazz festival, co-ordinated publicity, stuck posters around the town ... but, first, he had to clean the venue. Let me tell you about the venue...

The Hamza-Bey Dzami on Egnatia Street was built in 1468, shortly after the Turks took Thessaloniki. Despite its beauty as a building, the Greeks on reclaiming the city (just 73 years ago) were not about to treat any Moslem mosque with respect. Tacking on a tin roof here and there, a cluster of shops began to eat, cancer-like, into the church. As a final indignity, the mosque was converted into a porno-cinema, called the Alkazar a couple of years back. A stroke of evil genius. Where better to watch hard-core than in church? Signing the contracts with the council for the festival's short lease, the cinema proprietor handed the mayor a book of free tickets: "You and your family can come as often as you want."

Adding a touch of the pathetic, all through the festival a stream of classic dirty old men, raincoated, would stumble dumbly into the hall and stare at the stage in blank befuddlement. What the hell was going on ... and why were these people wearing clothes?

The Greek term for improvised music means, literally, self-made music - a useful phrase since improvisation always suggests "making do", something less than the *real thing*. The group that opened the festival were a lot less than the real thing, less than improvisation, too. Assembled for the festival from the remains of a group called Sphinx, these were five Athens-based jazz musicians gnawing at a half-baked jazz-rock style. I've always liked the idea of jazz-rock but scarcely ever heard anyone capable of playing it. I doubt if Miles himself could have made this

group sound good. They noodled endlessly, resolving nothing. The piano player was the only musician of any distinction among them. His name was Markos Alexiou, a beefy fellow with long hair and flying moustaches. He would try and mess with the time, making strange leaps, like a jet-lagged McCoy, dislocating the rhythm. Unfortunately, his colleagues seemed not to notice. The bass guitarist just thumb-slapped his way through everything. That the audience liked them may have been enough. Greeks had opened the bill and what they had played was not weirdo minority music. The town council was mollified. That's what we call jazz!

Workshop de Lyon followed, playing a much more concentrated music - a derivative music, too, though that may not matter. They often seem to want to sound like some way station between the Art Ensemble and Braxton's Quartet. A deal of their fanfare-like pieces recall Roscoe Mitchell's writing. And there are folkish elements in there that remind you of Ayler and Ornette in their more rootsy moments. (Then again, none of the aforementioned created anything out of thin air.)

What's pleasing about the Workshop de Lyon is their togetherness as a group, their accuracy. None of them seems to have the personality for taking daring leaps into the void. They are best at spinning out their long written lines and playing off drummer Christian Rollet's mastery of odd time signatures. And worst when trying to be funny. The French, with all their hang-dog gallic seriousness and self-consciousness are not much good at being funny ever unless cynicism is involved (in which field Céline trashes all challengers) and the Workshop could really soft-pedal on the jokes. I felt embarrassed for them when they started making little poot-poot-poot mouth sounds. Why do they do it? Louis Sclavis is a wonderful bassist - especially agile, good up near the bridge, too, that area where many bassists bluff and hope. But a manager worth his salt would gag him. Louis Sclavis is perhaps the star soloist, if only just. His expertise is well enough known, I think.

Han Bennink.

LIVE  
WIRE



suppose. He has a few little gimmicks I like, too, as when he gets an impressive conga effect in some combination of feed trickery and key noise. Thessaloniki's women liked him for different reasons. To do, I imagine, with the fact that he has some hair and no beard, making him almost unique among jazz musicians.

The next two days were taken up with lectures – all of which were Greek to me. A Mr George Barakos talked about the history of the Athens Jazz Club – now defunct, I believe. There was discussion on the development of European improvised music and the continued relevance or otherwise of the so-called black aesthetic. Unfortunately, I cannot tell you what conclusions were reached. Among the speakers was Sakis Papadimitriou, one of those portamenteau men who manage to be musician, critic, novelist, broadcaster and several other things simultaneously. At least he looks as if he knows what he is talking about. There is a body of opinion that holds that the Greek improvising scene is just two people – Papadimitriou and Floros Florides. They worked together formerly as a duo but are now scarcely talking to each other. I heard a barrel-load of gossipy reasons why this is so, which I'll decline to pass on. It's a pity, that's all.

Sakis' solo piano performance was extremely well-received. I enjoyed about half of it. He began by hammering on the closed piano lid using it as a drum – a move I thought rather passé – before switching to the keys for the usual Taylorish assaults and the equally usual Jarrett-style pregnant, lyrical flourishes. In between, however, he played a lot of inside-the-piano stuff that I had not heard留下 in quite that way. It looked pretty improbable, a bit like Polynesian surgery, Sakis pushing his sleeves up as he dived for the guts of the thing with bare hands or with a clutch of metal torture instruments but sound just rolled out of the piano in tidal waves of shimmering texture. Against which Sakis might worry a single string, depressing it for a persuasive silar sound.

Other Greeks: apart from Sakis, the most impressive player was one Vasilis Bapavasiliou, a bassist who performed in duet with a guitar-player called Costas Christos. The duet did not thrill me overmuch. Christos could play but, as with most of the Greeks, he seemed too often like a compendium of used licks. Generally very Third Stream, as if au-

ditioning for ECM, he had Gismonti down pat and was not even averse to the Ralph-Towner-Matchbook-In-The-Strings-Instant-African-Hunter's-Harp-Effect. His most original contribution was a perplexing habit of pushing the guitar's soundhole up to the microphone for inappropriate blasts of feedback. The duo sounded better when playing a chamber music closer to classical music than jazz and it was in this area that Bapavasiliou excelled. Very precise, very controlled ... Braxton would love him.

Manolis Mikeles was, somebody told me, "the Greek Stan Tracey". Would it be true. They have in common the fact that both were resident pianists at Ronnie Scott's. Mikeles lasted fifteen days before he was deported for lack of visa. That was back in the Sixties. It sounds as if he has spent the last twenty years working the cocktail lounges of the Hilton and Sheraton circuit. His connection to any kind of improvising scene is by now rather tenuous I could see no point at all in either playing, or listening to, tunes like "Fool On The Hill" or "A Nightingale Sang In Berkeley Square" in the context of a festival like this one.

Then there was A Priori – A Priori being a jazz-rock group of guitars, keyboards, bass and drums. They were not entirely dull. Even quite nostalgic with their twin lead guitars playing unison "instrumentals". Like Quicksilver Messenger Service wandering into the Bitches Brew zone but finally failing to run the woodoo down.

Spyros Feggos – formerly a writer for Greece's *Tzaz* magazine (defunct) and holding the fort (unpaid) whenever Floros was unable to be in several places at once – filled me in on a few of the Greek musicians missing from the festival. I include their names here in the interests of making this necessarily sketchy survey marginally more comprehensive. Those I did not see, then, were the Chalki Collective (guitar doubling trombone and violin/bass/drums/saxophone with everybody else playing little instruments). Currently, the Chalki Collective is down to a two-piece, however, as the drummer and saxophonist have been spirited away into the Greek army for the duration.

Piano players are apparently thick on the ground and include Minas Alexiades – at the moment on a scholarship in Germany, and Thomas Sliomis – said to be strongly influenced by Sakis Papadimitriou. On the other hand, drummers are hard to find. Alekos Christides is recommended. An Athens-based percussionist of classical background, he currently commutes between idioms and has played with Floros Florides ... Well, remember where you read it first.

I also met Costas Yiannopoulos, former publisher of *Tzaz* magazine who has his own record label Praxis and who will be promoting his own Praxis Festival in May in Athens, and with a bigger, more expensive bill than the ground-breaking Thessaloniki event. It's nothing but the sheerest prejudice but I felt that Yiannopoulos and I had been enemies for centuries. Almost everything he said set my teeth on edge. Speaking of his own festival he said flamboyantly: "Either it will destroy me ... or it will establish improvised music in Greece ... FOR EVER!" Without doubt the most pretentious remark I've ever heard from a promoter.

Concurrent with the concerts of self-made music, Thessaloniki was also playing host to the Olympic Chess Championships which meant that you usually had to explain several times that you were here for the Jazz Festival and not the Chess Festival. Acoustically, it

sounds much the same to the Greek ear. NO NOT CHESS, JAZZ I screamed after two weeks of it. Sometimes the two intertwined, though. A number of the musicians were in regular attendance at the Olympic Centre. Misha Mengelberg, it turned out, was on first-name terms with the cats in the Dutch team and so a number of grand masters started showing up at the concerts. The chess bug hit the musicians. Radu Malaffi and Mal Waldron became inseparables, permanently hunched over a pocket chess set. George Lewis and Evan Parker played the second of their two concerts within the Olympic complex. Atmospherically, that was a very tense affair. The curious chess freaks, all resolutely myopic in inch-thick spectacles, scrutinised the musicians as if they'd just dropped in from Mars. I don't know if they were interested enough in the music to be puzzled by it. It was more like these players were infringing upon valuable chess hours. (See, that's what they do. Yes. Pawn to queen's bishop fourth.)

The earlier Parker/Lewis concert, back at the trusty porno-mosque was more fruitful. There was a number of walk-outs, as with all of the music that had no "tunes" in it, which set George Lewis immediately on the offensive. He echoed and parodied any mutterings of discontent in the audience on the trombone, playing with the disturbance until the offenders finally realised what was happening and cooled out. It was an intelligent example of crowd control, and good improvisation. From there they moved into a Parker sound vortex, all whirling cycles within cycles. The saxophone seemed to describe both the inside and outside of the sound pool, harmonics detailing the inner ripples. Trombone set up a tremendously fast canon-like pattern that left just enough space for the particles of saxophone sound to splinter through its filter. Evan's long unbroken improvisations have often left me feeling drugged or hypnotised; this one, while less emotionally involving than some, kept you on your toes intellectually (to garble a few metaphors). One more point, it's difficult to measure progress in the work of an artist like Evan because his starting point was so radical. You can only measure him against the tradition he invented, and where are the signposts? But I do feel that his tenor-playing has gone up a couple of notches. For a while back there, after Evan first introduced his solo concerts, the tenor was definitely second fiddle. That's no longer the case (see the *Tracks* LP for relevant proof).

Two other duos were showcased – those of Misha Mengelberg and Han Bennink and Paul Lovens and Paul Lytton. The former completely wiped out the audience. From the clappingmeter's readings, Mengelberg/Bennink vied with the Steve Lacy Sextet as the festival's big hit. It was delightful to see Bennink through the eyes of the Greeks – ninety per cent of whom were seeing him for the first time.

I will never understand how Misha and Han can insist that their act is not visual and that humour plays no very significant part in it. I'd call that claim a bare-faced lie. With an audience behind him, Han hams it up outrageously. He crawled into the audience to retrieve broken sticks. He sprawled in the front stalls and rattled his hi-hat by means of a length of string. He played saxophone in the toilets, beat cymbals while wearing them tin-hat-like, and lay under the piano pummelling it with his fists and kicking it. The last action inevitably brought back memories of Leroy Jones' witteringly scathing essay "The





Sakis Papadimitriou.



Irene Aebi at Thessaloniki.

Burton Greene Affair" (required reading for the Workshop De Lyon and others). But Bennink is about the only improviser who can act the fool and not seem like some mere petulant kid rattling the playpen's bars. The sheer brute force of his extroversion rules out such a response. "I still think he's too loud," Misha confided later and the pianist tried all the tricks in the book to turn him down. The oldest one still works nicely, Misha miming a furious solo, hands pumping air. First, you see Bennink's head cocked, intrigued. Then his right ear seems to grow bigger as he strains to catch the music. Finally, he eases up on the ride cymbal...

Exhilarated, Thessaloniki was too jazzed by the Dutch Franksters to deal with Lovers and Lytton. But: "There are some groups to enjoy and some to persevere with." At least there were a few of us who thought that the two percussionists played beautifully. I like their album *The Fetch* but it is no substitute even for how the duo sounds live. They work so well with the space they play in, really get a tone out of each drum, cymbal et cetera. I particularly like the way Lovers responds to this duo setting, probably because I have seen him so much more often in Schlippenbach's large ensembles and trio where he is

required to maintain a continual busy flux. There's so much more room in the duo. It feels like each sound is there because it has to be.

The Thessaloniki audience was difficult to predict. It took me half of the first week to realise that jazz is as foreign a language to most Greeks as is free improvisation. Mal Waldron's set - a long and, I thought, melodic sequence of ballads and improvisations, an hour and a half of unbroken solo play - produced a lot of fidgeting and sighing. An unruly element tried to terminate it with sardonic hand-claps. The next night (all of the visitors played twice), Mal played shorter pieces and gave the audience an easier ride.

Having said that, there was also a unit core of very informed jazz fans in the crowd. They recognised, for instance, the theme of Kenny Wheeler's "Gnu High" and cheered it. Kenny was in ferocious form. Chris Lawrence put it well: "Everything Ken played sounded so lovely, I kept wanting to hand the bass to someone else, so I could sit down and listen to him." On flugelhorn, trumpet, cornet, Wheeler was all starbursts and supernovae. Blindingly good. Of all the musicians I've met, Wheeler strikes me as the most enigmatic. It's impossible to correlate his personality with

his creativity. From what *watlings* does that stuff come? No clues in Ken's mild-mannered bearing. The whole quartet was steaming, with John Marshall explosively up on it. One composition of John Taylor's - a Latinate thing called, if I remember correctly, "Adios" - corkscrewed itself up to impossible tempi... Tremendous, frankly.

Another good advertisement for the importance of the group was Steve Lacy's Sextet, which has become a world-beater by virtue of its endurance, largely. As Lacy has said, the music has gotten clearer over the years. So, too, have the characters of the group crystallized. Oliver Johnson is almost provocatively laconic in his drum response to the singing simplicity of Lacy's seesawing compositions. Really the drollest drummer around. Steve Potts has gradually come out from Lacy's shadow. In time, his tenure with Lacy will come to be as respected as that of John Gilmore with Sun Ra. Potts is well on his way to becoming a soloist of comparable stature. There is an urgency to his alto-playing that is genuinely thrilling, while on soprano he seems duty-bound to play the disciple. Excellent musician from any standpoint, though. Irene Aebi's violin and cello are used more as textural colouration than solo voidings - to thicken the plot, as it were. But her singing - boy! Every other jazz singer curls and claws his or her way around the line, splattering on the portando with a trowel. Aebi hits every note like a sharp-shooter. Her pitching seems miraculous, her ability to sing long unison lines with the horns phenomenal.

The only question mark in the band for me is Bobby Few. I've always enjoyed his swirling piano style but I'm not sure if Lacy's music is the optimum context for it. Within these stripped-down structures, he quite often seems verbose, his zipping and unzipping of the keyboard superfluous. Does Lacy feel that Few softens the austerity of the music, renders it more accessible? I don't know...

Speaking of austerity, the final word was left to M.L.A. Blek, the group formed by Belgian pianist Fred Van Hove and featuring trombonist Radu Malfatti and Paul Rutherford with Mark Charig on cornet and alto horn. I'm guessing merely but I'd imagine the purity of their music comes closest to Floros Florides' heart. He must have felt cheered that the group was quite well received. It was a sober rather than a raving response but the band isn't set up to have 'em dancing in the aisles. Me, I'm too far along the road of corruption to be touched by the music as I would once have been. I would like to hear a celebration of the free spirit in the group's rarefied atmospheres and feathery sighs, to take a delight in the delicate poise of the sounds. However, I find myself overwhelmed by the thanklessness of their task. The fact that this was Blek's first gig in two years, the knowledge that one of the band (a beautiful player) is currently driving a cab to make ends meet - such considerations overbalanced my enjoyment of the music. I liked it, sure, and I thought Radu Malfatti's manipulation of mutes and extras in the bell of his trombone was . . . clever. But still, this feeling of the futility of their struggle remained. The hour-glass is running out on this kind of collective improvisation.

As the chairs were packed away on Sunday night in the church, the porno boss gave Monday morning's movie a trial screening. The last image of the improvisation festival was of a nude woman straddling a coffin. I'd hate to ponder the significance and possible symbolism of that.

## KENNY CLARE BENEFIT CONCERT 100 Club, London: 9 January, 1985

Without question one of the more agreeable aspects of the jazz scene in London is its tradition of support for musicians incapacitated by illness. Ranks are closed, musical differences are forgotten, services offered. Friends and colleagues turn out in large numbers to make their contribution to what is seen as a common cause. Such a tradition is unique to jazz.

So it was at the 100 Club when a near-capacity audience attended the benefit concert organised by pianist Bill LeSage for drummer Kenny Clare. More than thirty musicians turned out to donate their services and an even larger number came along to support the gig. Predictably, drummers were strongly in evidence. This was one of those pleasant occasions when friendships were renewed and musical reminiscences exchanged.

First on stage was the Ronnie Scott Quintet to open the proceedings in their usual stylish manner. Particularly impressive in this set was a beautiful version of "Every Time We Say Goodbye" played as a duet by Ronnie Scott and pianist John Critchenson. At the end of this set George Coleman, who had wandered over from Frith Street, sat in with Ronnie's rhythm section and raised the temperature more than a little with a blistering version of "Bags' Groove".

The Terry Jenkins Band came next – this could certainly be described as an all-star band. The brass section of Derek Watkins, Alan Downey, Henry Lowther, John Barclay and Derek Wadsworth worked their way through an interesting set of arrangements strongly supported by a saxophone section which included Peter King, Stan Sulzmann and Andy Mackintosh. Tony Lee (piano), Ron Mathewson (bass) and Terry Jenkins (drums) completed the band.

Kenny Clare's colleagues in the Pizza Express All Stars next paid their tribute. Danny Moss (tenor sax), Dave Shepherd (clarinet), and Roy Williams (trombone) shared the front-line honours and were well-supported by Brian Lemon (piano), Len Skeat (bass) and Bobby Worth (drums). Larry Adler (harmonica) joined the band for a couple of numbers on this set.

Finally, a most unusual combination of musicians took the stage for the final set. This was a sort of Band of Band-leaders, fronted by Acker Bilk (clarinet), Humphrey Lyttelton (trumpet), John Dankworth (alto sax) and Don Lusher (trombone). Despite their various allegiances with traditional, mainstream, modern and big-band jazz, this worked surprisingly well. Indeed, a lesson could be learnt from this about the futility of stylistic categorisation in jazz. Supported by Bill LeSage (piano), Spike Healey (bass) and Tony Kinsey (drums), the band worked its way through a series of blues and standards. The culmination of this unusual set came when Cleo Laine joined the band for a couple of numbers. As always, she sang beautifully.

Not only was the evening a great success musically but, more important, it raised £2,500 for Kenny Clare and his family. All of those present must have been shocked by the news of his death a mere two days later. The support for this benefit concert clearly indicated the affection and esteem in which Kenny Clare was held by the jazz community and provided a fitting tribute to a distinguished musical career.

Dick Knowles



David Thomas on the South Bank.

## DAVID THOMAS/LINDSAY COOPER/ CHRIS CUTLER & IVOR CUTLER Queen Elizabeth Hall, London South Bank: 2 January, 1985

David Thomas and Ivor Cutler are both raconteurs; they convey their insights and truths through the medium of story-telling and – whether the immediate form of their story-telling be poem, song or narration – they offer a fresh perspective on accepted notions and convention.

An ingenious piece of programming brought Thomas and Cutler together at the Queen Elizabeth Hall and seemed to highlight the fact that although they adopted a similar medium, their approaches were almost diametrically opposed.

It was as if Cutler took the oak tree and stripped away the leaves, branches, trunk and roots until he was left with a single acorn and presented this to his audience in the knowledge that it contained the essence of the oak.

In contrast, Thomas took the acorn and nurtured it; his narratives embraced each aspect of the evolving tree as if acknowledging that it is only through examination of leaves, branches, trunk and roots that we can come to appreciate the whole tree.

Thus Cutler's work tended towards the epigrammatic, while Thomas linked his songs with lengthy introductions, establishing a framework and context for their lyrical content. Cutler's demeanour resembled that of the paternal headmaster or the pedantic uncle that commands deferential respect; Thomas was the elder brother who gathered all his wide-eyed listeners in and sweetened his truths with humour.

# LIVE WIRE

Thomas was skilfully aided and abetted in his work by Chris Cutler's adept percussion and the reeds of Lindsay Cooper – his regular accomplices – who added weight and colour to his songs and an atmospheric soundtrack to his narratives.

It took them time to establish the degree of intimacy that Thomas' approach required as they ran through a brace of songs drawn primarily from the *Pere Ubu* albums *The Art Of Walking* and *The Song Of The Bailing Man* but also incorporated new material from the as-yet-unreleased new Thomas album. However, by the time they'd tackled "Rhapsody In Pink" (with an inspired introduction by Cooper), "Ode To Pockets" and, especially, "Petrified", they had the audience in the palm of their hands.

It was the sort of gig which sent you home discussing the content, rather than the form...

Kenneth Ansell

## GEORGE COLEMAN Ronnie Scott's, London: 7–13 January, 1985

TENORMAN George Coleman is nothing if not consistent. There is such an unrelentingly iron determination behind everything that emerges from his horn that inspiration sounds like a concept reserved for sissies. Off his night, he intimidates his material, and variety of mood and melody cease to be much of a feature of the soundscape. Each of his numbers at Ronnie Scott's began with a highly promising unaccompanied section but boiled up along similar lines with the entry of the rhythm section. Will-power set in. In the past, he has leaned heavily on repetitive and protracted passages of circular breathing to beef up his momentum; there was less of that this visit, but plenty of his current preoccupation with sparring, ascending notes and convention.

"Summertime" began beautifully, returning from each churning foray to the same slatey, legato cry which seemed to determine the emotional climate. A long series of high rising squeals, however, signalled the arrival of the tenorman's Dunkirk spirit and he handed over to pianist Geoff Castle on a truculent low A, tamped down against his leg. Castle's job wasn't an easy one in view of that baton but he brilliantly combined the prettiness of the tune with the crowding tensions the leader had dictated, and Martin Drew was a marvellous accompanist, varying his strokes. That was the last of "Summertime", for Big George's return could have bulldozed an eight-lane motorway.

I'd never heard him all the way down the r&b alley before, though the years on the chitlin circuit with B.B. King indicated that Big Jay McNeely's shtick was hardly beyond his grasp. His final number was low-down dirty blues, settling eventually on "Night Train", complete with phlegmy buzzings, whinneys and blaring honks. It was good, too. Castle played stomping piano, Drew drove a sizzling off-beat, and Dave Green – accurately miked for a change – drilled through the bulls-eye.

Brian Case



# SALSA!

**I**t's hot, it's vibrant and it's very much the dance-music of the moment.

**Sue Steward steamed over to New York to see its stars. Meanwhile, back home, she directs your feet to the "Barrio Beat" on record ...**

I ONCE thought "Salsa" was a nicely definable genre. I used to ask musicians: "What does 'Salsa' mean to you?", thinking I'd make a clear picture out of the confusing variety of styles and rhythms and dances – and even a lot of jazz – which the term included.

Daniel Ponce – the Cuban conga-player – sang a translation from his song "Malo Nacional" . . . "I only think of Salsa when I sit down to eat!" (Salsa is a fiery, hot sauce). But Tito Puente really put me straight when he said: "It could be called 'Matzoh Ball Soup' – it's just a label, it doesn't matter what it's called."

"Salsa" is seen by many Latinos – particularly the older generation – as a nebulous, misleading term that landed, suddenly in the Seventies, on the music they'd been playing for years; music which they described by its rhythms: son, cha-cha-cha, guaguanco, rumba, mambo. On the other hand, though, it suits many Latin musicians – particularly younger ones who yearn to be incorporated into or at least acknowledged by, the international music scene whose system demands categories. Historically, the music has always had an intimate and reciprocal relationship with other American dance and popular music (especially Afro-American styles) but it has never been treated equally. Even in the Fifties, when the mambo, the rumba and cha-cha-cha were being danced from the Congo to the Caribbean, the music – as music – was never taken seriously outside the community. The fad over, the musicians were allowed to sink back into El Barrio.

The issue is complex. It's not just "the evil industry" which perpetuates the situation: the Latin community itself reacts to its position at the base of America's vicious hierarchy; the Spanish language reinforces that distance and helps maintain a self-contained and self-sufficient (and proudly so) music and industry. Hispanics are fiercely nationalistic, loyal to the music and its stars – as long as they don't change too much. They're also sentimental, particularly about being Latinos and about the islands and countries of their families' origins. Today, some artists are reacting against these stereo-typed and traditional attitudes which they see as having hindered the music. They are entering the international market and drawing on non-Cuban or Puerto Rican musical sources, joining the vogue for internationalism in pop.

Salsa today is more fragmented and disparate than ever. In any one week in New York you can feast on – live or from DJs – a whole spectrum of music which shelters under this ample umbrella. This encompasses sharing entangled roots in Cuba, West Africa and Europe: the fast, sexy Dominican *merengue*; revivals of Cuban *charangas* and son; Latin and Cuban jazz; the ethnic, folkloric music and dance performances of Cuba, Puerto Rico and Dominica; religious cult music, drumming and chanting from Cuba, *santteria*; a dash of non-electronic congas in some electro-pop and funk . . . the music of South America, centred around SOB's (Sounds of Brazil) club is another story altogether . . .

Fairly frequently, Madison Square Gardens hosts a star-studded "Latin extravaganza", – irresistible to a visitor – which focusses the community with an almost religious intensity, young and old. Last October, for instance, a tribute to the twenty-five-year career of Cheo Feliciano – one of Puerto Rico's most adored singers – drew nearly 20,000 ecstatic fans. The

parade of acts (mostly Puerto Rican – Cuban madonna Celia Cruz was invited to pay her verbal tribute but, mysteriously, did not sing; she would have undoubtedly upstaged everyone) who had worked with, or been influenced by, this man whose charm and charisma recalled Al Green (even to the endless supply of trademark red roses) was the story of twenty-five years of changing music. As pianist-composer-arranger Eddie Palmieri said in *The Daily News*: "The story of [Cheo's] career is also the story of Latin music in New York".

Joe Cuba re-formed his famous Sixties' Sextet for the occasion, fronted by Cheo's beloved rich baritone which has breathed tender vitality and compelling emotion into a whole catalogue of ballads and earned him eight Grammy nominations. Cheo's partnership with Palmieri also led them to Grammy-land; this was a night for memories and pride. It was also a reflection on the influences at work between the generations: the line-up brought Palmieri's latest band of youthful Puerto Rican talents across the sea, to provide the solidity behind this man's unpredictable, manic brilliance on piano.

Palmieri's set, early on, was tantalisingly brief but, fortunately, two nights later, he and his brother Charlie sat opposite each other – a grand piano apiece – in the Village Gate's "Salsa meets Jazz" night and played an historic and unforgettable set which gave full rein to "young Eddie's" genius. Eddie can switch from coaxing impressionistic pastels from the keys with the delicacy of a child, to rich stark "drumming" (he started out on timbales – and it still shows), elbows and palms flat on the keys (alarmingly, that reminded me of Han Bennink). He is a master of rhythm; no matter how far he strays towards the classics or a boogie, the faint pulse of the 3-2 clave which underlies all Cuban music can be heard floating in air. The stage at Madison Square gave this small dynamo ample room for his characteristic leaps and the triumphant jumps which follow his always dazzling solos – as if he has been possessed and marvelling himself. Eddie Palmieri is a revered legend in salsa; it's a sad comment on the isolation of this music, that his exquisite solos which never sit in one place or time, genre or era, for long don't reach more ears. His presence in Cheo Feliciano's show was a reminder of their entwined careers, another partnership which, through Palmieri's arrangements and Cheo's delivery, moved the music on.

Willie Colon, Ruben Blades and Hector Lavoe all brought their latest outfits, developed since their significant split in Tito Puente.





Daniel Ponce.

recent years. That trio forged between them a new sound in the Seventies, with a string of hit albums and a pile of radical rearrangements of the Cuban ingredients which were to shape modern Salsa. Hector Lavoe's repertoire today contains his own re-workings of many of these classics: "Much jazzier, I use more brass," he explained. Colon and Blades have moved into different territories.

As a teenage star, Willie Colon idolised Cheo; his first band with Hector Lavoe was modelled on Colon's; Lavoe, born in the same Puerto Rican town as Feliciano, was like his mentor – born to sing ballads. On stage together, Lavoe made no pretence of his love and respect for the older man, their duet together full of the passion and tenderness which both can effortlessly lend to a song.

Today, both Colon and Blades look beyond Cuba for their inspirations: Colon to Brazil and the Caribbean islands; Blades – a Panamanian – to reggae, doo-wop, Brazil, traditional Latin American folk music and even to the Beatles. Their songs always shunned the stereotypes of love and romance for stronger stuff; today Colon peddles satires in danceable disguises while Blades is more hard-hitting and his music more risky. Both are "traitors" to their critics, "visionaries" to their advocates, the men who will lead Latin music into new markets and who have managed to break from the stagnating or backward-looking formulae of the past decade.

At Madison Square Garden, just how far they have gone was evident. Blades and his Sels de Solar (six from the Tenement) stood out in this setting like a rock band. Blades in a plain black suit and T-shirt (not a medallion in sight) moon danced as he sang and crooked his finger at the audience like a politician (actually, he's an attorney).

The diminutive Colon looked like a glam bell-hop and whatever doubts any fans had about him after his Caribbean-drenched album Criollo last year were dismissed by his stunning show. Colon is a sensualist who can't resist the charms and power of a massive horn section, the force of several trombones – including his own – which was his intervention a decade ago. His band also includes, exceptionally, three female singers.

For the bitter-sweet finale song "El General" – about the tyranny of an anonymous general in an un-named junta – Colon played a big Brazilian bass drum while a quartet of "naval officers" marched on and broke into a body-popping routine. He later revealed this had been his sixteen-year-old, rap-electro-obsessed son's idea; that Colon implemented it,

suggests how much he enjoys testing the elasticity of his music and its traditions.

It was with Hector Lavoe's band that die-hard Salsa fans could relax and enjoy the unchanging beauty of Cuba's heritage. His outrageous outfit – gold lame with long, white, cowboy fringes was more Grand Ole Opry than MSG and an hilarious contrast to Feliciano's elegant suavity. But Lavoe's faultless twelve-piece band provided some of the best improvised solos of the night which is, after all, the test.

The finale brought, first, Feliciano's family on stage – a mic each – then the other singers in turn. Corny as it sounds out of context, the feeling of "cosa nostra" – our family – had infected everyone. The stage was full of tales of personal tragedies, of fights with drugs and failing careers, of passing fashions and favours yet, brought together for this night, all the hardships were forgotten in the euphoria of the moment. Cheo Feliciano endlessly threw red roses and, as the lights rose, he and his family – like royalty – did a walkabout, chatting with the audience who strolled to the stage edge as if they really were just family after all. ■

#### TO KEEP APACE OF LATIN RELEASES IN LONDON, VISIT:

- Hitman Records, Lexington Street, London W1.

#### FOR CLASSICS, SECONDHAND TREASURES AND MAIL-ORDER (ESPECIALLY USEFUL FOR OUT-OF-TOWN FANS):

- Rhythm Records, Camden High Street, London NW1.
- Stern's African Record Centre, 116 Whitfield Street, London W1.

#### FOR LATIN-JAZZ AND CROSSOVERS:

- Groove Records, Greek Street, London W1.

#### FOR OUT-OF-TOWNS:

Possibly worth an Away-Day ticket of any salsa fan's money – Morris's Diskery, Birmingham 1 (in the centre of town).

#### HAVE LATIN RECORDS – WILL TRAVEL . . . TO HEAR LATIN RECORDS, FOLLOW THESE DJS:

- Paul Murphy, Dave Hucker, Baz the Jaz, Giles Peterson (Solar Radio), Jonathan Moore, Paul Bradshaw, Jumbo Vanrenen (and myself) who will all willingly leave London.

Ruben Blades.



## SALSA SOUNDS

**NEW YORK NOW** – Daniel Ponce  
(Celluloid/OAO CEL 5005)

Featuring Paquito D'Rivera, Orlando "Puntilla" Rios, Michael Beinhorn, Bill Laswell, Ignacio Berroa, Oscar Gonzalez, Nelson Rodriguez, Regino Tellechea, Francisco Rigores, Jose "Chi-Chi" Trapaga, Joe de Jesus, Alberto Morgan, Olafemi Mitchell, Alex Rodriguez.

## SUPER ALL-STARS (Caiman CLP 902 – import)

Featuring Tito Puente, Paquito D'Rivera, Mario Rivera, Juan Marquez, Chocolate Armenteros, Valery Ponomorev, Spanky Davis, Jose Rodriguez, Claudio Roditi, Steve Turre, Andy Gonzalez, Daniel Ponce, Ignacio Berroa, Felo Barrios, Adalberto Santiago, Felo Barrios, Leo Gonzalez.

**EL REY** – Tito Puente and his Latin Ensemble  
(Concord Picante CIP 250)

Featuring Francisco Aguabella, Jimmy Frisaura, Johnny Rodriguez, Ray Gonzalez, Jorge Dalto, Jose Madera, Mario Rivera, Bobby Rodriguez.

## CHARANGA CASINO

(SAR Records SLP 1037 – import)

Featuring Felipe Ramos, Oscar Diaz, Miguel Martin, Charlie Cubides, Wilmo "Bimbo" Rivera, Hector Nieves, Roberto Carrero, Edwin Bonilla, Eric Bodner, Roberto Torres, Ivan Rivera.

Forty years after Cuban conga-player Chano Pozo beat Dizzy Gillespie's bop into new rhythmic dimensions, Daniel Ponce – another islander – arrived with his congas in New York, from Havana. Like Pozo before him, Daniel Ponce has gradually incorporated his formidable talents into the dance-music and jazz of the day: in his case, hip-hop (Herbie Hancock), funk (Nona Hendryx) and rock (Laurie Anderson, Mick Jagger), as well as into the self-contained Latin-jazz club scene. Here, his Cuban roots are bared and the links with West Africa's religions re-forged in sessions with players like Irakere's ex-saxophonist Paquito D'Rivera and percussionists like Ignacio Berro. Daniel Ponce's *New York Now* is not new now but is a timeless souvenir of his varied musical life. It features both the raw, rootsy Cuban percussion-and-chants (including Ponce's divine conga "concertos") and the more spare engagements with NYC's electronic hip-hop avant-garde, circling the bass-lines of Bill Laswell.

Ponce and D'Rivera reappear as *Super All-Stars* (no idle title) with other legends of four decades of Latin music history, including the bands of Machito, Tito Rodriguez, Stan Kenton, Tito Puente. This is a definitive collection of modernised, uncompromised Cuban dance-music, mostly son style, most written by Cuban Ignacio Pineiro. It bursts with solos which rise elegantly from an unfaltering foundation of clashing cross-

rhythms and darting horns. The soloists tend to travel in pairs – not always obvious textural matches: baritone sax and piccolo, vibes and guitar (played in the jangly, Spanish-influenced style of the Cuban tres), guitar and piano. Chocolate Armenteros' trumpet – a hot favourite in London clubs on his own albums – leads the horns in manic flurries then breaks away with magnificent upward surges; Mario Rivera – a Machito veteran – roves through his saxophone collection, takes some unbelievably agile baritone solos, and Tito Puente launches the album with a crystalline vibes solo which confirms his status on the international stage. In "Bim Con Tim", for instance, his fast, taut timbales battle with Ponce's equally fluid congas at breath-taking speed. If anyone needs convincing that Latin music is more than just the best dance-music around – and worthy of attention as music, too – this is the album to do it.

*El Rey*, on a jazz label, is aimed at a crossover, non-Latin market. It is a cheaper but poorer comparison. Tito Puente: "*El Rey*" – "The King" offers jazz standards ("Autumn Leaves") and classics ("Coltrane's Equinox") and a reminder of Puente's influential pop history ("Oye Como Va"). Possibly his own band is less challenging or, possibly, the cross-over market is seen as less discerning. Whatever, this record lacks the tension, the fire and brimstone that irradiates every one of Super All-Stars' eight songs. Even some of Puente's solos sound like party-pieces in places. But there are some great moments. As usual, Puente has gathered a strong band of experienced soloists; the versatile Argentinian pianist Jorge Dalto makes an amusing intro segue from dramatic rolling Rachmaninov into a Cuban *motonito* and Mario Rivera (again) is especially vivid on flute. One pleasure of Puente's music is his loyal bass-player Bobby Rodriguez whose lovely repertoire of melodies do more than just faultlessly anchor the band.

Another side of Latin New York is the profusion of charanga bands. Rooted where the French danzon collided with the Afro-Cuban rhythms of early-century free slaves and related rhythmically to the cha-cha-cha, charangas are the champagne of Latin music: a light ethereal combination of (wood) flute, violin and percussion. Charanga Casino are a young, mustachioed nine-piece from New York. Their record *Charanga Casino* starts, surprisingly, with a transformed Gilbert O'Sullivan song! – a catchy springboard for improvisations which soon lose the original. In the wrong hands, charangas can teeter towards Radio Two schmaltz. In the hands of experts, charangas are sweet; certainly, the violin (Eric Bodner) makes pastel streaks but the staccato outbursts of an expertly overblown flute (Hector Nieves) make bold, insistent jets. Behind them all, the percussionists and singers keep up a hectic dialogue and no-one can stand still.

These four records reveal the immense variety and unique complexity of Latin music recordings being mass-marketed today.

Sue Steward

Ray Baretto.



# ON THE RECORD:

# THE WIRE'S GUIDE TO BARGAINS

**Jeremy Crump and Alan Ross** set off in search of some real album gems and find, for instance, that the vagaries of fashion and record-company policies can, for once, have happy consequences . . .

WITH jazz albums now costing anything up to £6 or £7, even without considering Japanese imports, keeping up with new releases can be expensive. To explore the music's past also becomes financially daunting.

However, some assistance is forthcoming in the guise of re-issues on a variety of cheap labels. In many cases, their origins are in record companies periodically selling rights to older recordings which aren't considered to promise future profit. Others are straightforward bootlegs, while a third source is albums dumped on overseas markets in the form of club series.

This brief guide to some of the albums around at £3 or less aims to highlight some major recordings which, due to their packaging or limited sleeve information, may not have attracted the attention they deserve. Series with common sleeve format, for instance, can look especially uninviting. We don't cover here labels widely distributed through high-street record stores, notably Jazz Reactivation and Mercury, largely for reasons of space.

## EUROPA JAZZ/GIGANTI DEL JAZZ

These are very cheap, Italian book-club records. Europa Jazz have English sleeve notes, otherwise the two are identical. Retailing for as little as £1.50, most are concert recordings and the pressings generally good. The bulk is anthologies, with tracks by a variety of artists, so don't get too excited at the mouthwatering, or at times incongruous, combinations of musicians listed on the sleeves.

Europa 1013, unfortunately, doesn't present a "Mingus, Monk, Coltrane and Dolphy jam session", for example. One side is from the 1962 Coltrane/Dolphy European tour, not especially well recorded, while the Mingus item features the band including Ted Curson and

Dolphy also heard on the Atlantic Mingus at Antibes album.

Other recommended albums in this series include Europa 1003 – a studio recording by Woody Shaw, Chick Corea and Dave Holland.

Europa 1006 is a curious compilation with Cato Barbieri, Albert Ayler (a live performance of "Ghosts") and Don Cherry on one side and John Handy's band live at Monterey on the other (originally CBS 6278).

Giganti del Jazz 44 has tracks by Art Blakey, Freddie Hubbard, Horace Silver and Max Roach.

## JAZZ ANTHOLOGY

This French label has over 100 titles of variable quality but some are very good indeed. Some of the live recordings are poor, probably bootlegs. Both the Rollins titles are frustrating for this reason, even though Sonny Rollins' *Live in Europe* (JA 5241) presents the "Our Man in Jazz" band, Don Cherry, Henry Grimes and Billy Higgins. Ornette Coleman's *Stating the Case* (JA 5246) suffers from the complete inaudibility of the bass.

The series includes two excellent Parker albums and, indeed, Parker is well represented on several of these cheap labels.

JA 5108 has live sessions from 1947–48. One is Barry Ulanov's Battle of the Bands – a curious radio event in which a bebop and trad band played on the same show (including some of each other's tunes) while listeners voted for the ones they preferred. The beboppers – including Parker, Fats Navarro, Lenny Tristano and Billy Bauer – won.

Charlie Parker-Bud Powell-Fats Navarro (JA 5136) is a 1949 session live at Birdland.

Another pioneer of bop is represented by Charlie Christian. His *Live at Minton's* (JA 5122), recorded in 1941, includes Thelonious Monk and duplicates the Society LP *The Harlem Jazz Scene* (No. One in Max Harrison's *Modern Jazz: The*

*Essential Recordings*). The Charlie Christian Live 1939–41 (JA 5181) presents the guitarist in concert with Benny Goodman's Sextet and Orchestra, making for enlightening comparison with the same bands' studio recordings of Goodman standards such as "Airmail Special".

The Slim Gaillard Trio-Quartet-Orchestra is a collection of good airshots from 1945, with many of his贞est numbers.

Easily overlooked is Rex Stewart-Cootie Williams (JA 5201), a re-issue of an old Concert Club album called *The Big Challenge*. This was recorded in 1956 by a double front-line which included Bud Freeman and Coleman Hawkins, and Vic Dickenson and Laurence Brown. To call it "classic mainstream" is hardly to do it justice.

Two early Coltrane records – *Tanganyika Strat* (JA 5163) and *Dual Africa* (JA 5158) – are studio recordings originally issued under the name of leader trumpeter Wilbur Hardin and also feature Curtis Fuller on trombone. They are representative examples of Coltrane's first period.

Finally, the Art Farmer *Nature Boy* (JA 5239), with Phil Woods on alto, is another fine studio recording.

## IGRANDI DEL JAZZ

It may be too late to advise you to buy as many of these as you can afford. This Italian series, in uniform black covers, has several pages of Italian text giving career details and assessment, plus illustrations. They were presumably remaindered by publishers Fabri Editore and are now hard to get from their former distributors. Nevertheless, you might find some lingering in record shops. They're very cheap (under £2). Some – such as the Trane, Miles and Rollins volumes – are anthologies from albums which you will probably later wish to obtain complete; others are, in effect, re-issues of whole LPs.

The series includes recordings by leading members of the Seventies' contemporary scene. Among them are Archie Shepp – originally Black Lion's *Montreux I* (1975); Cecil Taylor – which is Freedom's *Live at Montreux*, a solo piano recital from 1974; and Sam Rivers – originally *The Quest* on Red Records (1976). With Dave Holland and Barry Altschul, this last is perhaps the most attractive of this group of records.

A Braxton volume (1976) includes tracks with Holland, Altschul and Kenny Wheeler, a duet with Chick Corea and a performance by the London Tuba Quartet.

From the previous decade, Albert Ayler is a re-issue of the album *Ghosts* (with Don Cherry), in many ways the most immediately appealing of all Ayler's records.

Earlier re-issues of more-or-less complete albums are Clifford Brown – most of *A Study in Brown* by the Roach/Brown Quintet with Harold Land, and Serge Chaloff – which is *Blue Serge*, another of the less celebrated (but unjustly so) records discussed in *Modern Jazz: The Essential Recordings*.

A number of other volumes take tracks equally from a pair of major LPs. Among these are *Fats Navarro Memorial Vols I and II*; *Le Konz* (from two Atlantics of 1955–56 – one of which also features Warne Marsh); and *Thelonious Monk* – a distillation of two Black Lion trio recordings from Paris in 1971 (with Art Blakey and Al McKibbon) to which is added a 1952 recording of "Monk's Dream".

*Ornette Coleman* is the best of the 1961 Croydon Concert, issued on two records by CBS. The selection here concentrates on Coleman's alto, to the exclusion of experiments with violin, trumpet and writing for wind quintet.

Finally, the pre-war volumes provide excellent introductions for listeners new to this music. Especially recommended is *Henry Red Allen*, comprising music from his time with the Luis Russell Orchestra in 1929 up to the "Ride Red Ride" session with Coleman Hawkins.

Fabbri Editori also issued a series of "Jan Sessions" and "Great Meetings", several of them re-issues of Verve and Pablo albums, notably the Mulligan/Desmond *Blues in Time* (1957).

There is also one of a number of re-issues of the Parker/Gillespie/Mingus/Powell/Roach *Quintet of the Year* concert at Massey Hall – truly, an essential recording. This is probably the cheapest version currently available.

## JOKER

This remarkable Italian series has about 200 titles. Pressings are generally adequate but often no better than that. If you are looking for seven Jelly Roll Mortons (*The Saga of Mr Jellyroll* SM 3550–56, in a box or singly), 14 Bix Beiderbecks (*Bixology* SM 3557–3570), or 12 Louis Armstrongs – including all the Hot 5 and Hot 7 as well as big-band

tracks from 1925–1933 (SM 3742–53), then this is the label for you.

Joker is a particularly valuable source of major pre-1950 recordings. Of particular importance are six Sidney Bechet albums, including the Mezzrow/Bechet Quintet (SM 3078–9), the New Orleans Footwarmers (SM 3571–73) and a 1940 recording with Muggsy Spanier (SM 3090).

Three Billie Holiday collections, largely from the pre-LP era, are worth looking out for. *Georgia on My Mind* (SM 3966) includes tracks with Lester Young, also re-released by CBS. *10 Fabulous Recordings* (SM 3289) is a Commodore compilation – including "Strange Fruit", and *The Immortal Billie Holiday* (SM 3131) includes a live session with the Basie band at the Savoy Ballroom.

Among Joker's Parker titles is a sizeable proportion of the Dial recordings. Indeed, the Miles Davis *Out of Nowhere* is, in reality, from the same source despite the much later cover picture of Miles. Unfortunately, insufficient data identify which take is which and different takes are distributed throughout the five albums. The full-price Spotlite recordings undoubtedly have the edge in this respect.



## CHARLIE PARKER RECORDS

This series includes various live Parker recordings and an album entitled *West Coast Time* which contains the "Relaxing at Camarillo" and "Cool Blues" sessions along with the infamous "Lover Man" date.

## DELETIONS

The demise of an independent label, or a clear-out by a major, can briefly make available some very desirable records.

Those around at the time of writing include some of the Atlantic *That's Jazz* series, in their distinctive silver covers. Two titles to look out for are Art Blakey's *Jazz Messengers* with Thelonious Monk – which features Johnny Griffin, and the Ray Charles/Milt Jackson *Soul Brothers*

Some Elektra Musician albums recorded in the late Seventies are now turning up, notably the Joe Albany *Portrait of an Artist* and Woody Shaw: *Master of the Art*.

Artists' House and Graham Collier's Mosaic are two indie labels to be found among deletions. Andrew Hill's *From California with Love* (Artists' House) and the Howard Riley Shaped Music (Mosaic) are two contemporary solo piano albums worth getting to know.

A curiosity of this end of the trade is that you can sometimes buy a deletion in preference to a more expensive re-issue. This is currently true of the Bethlehem label which includes the Charles Mingus *East Coasting*, Booker Little's *Booker Little and Friend* – with George Coleman, and Roland Kirk's *Early Roots*.

## AVAILABILITY

For deletions, you will need to search the specialist jazz record shops.

The cheap labels are available from various distributors and there's no reason why your local record shop shouldn't be able to get them. Useful addresses are:

**Joker, Charlie Parker** – Mainstream Record Co, 17–23 Lancing Road, Croydon, Surrey.

**Europa, Jazz Anthology**, Bethlehem – Crusader Marketing, Unit F2, Charles House, Bridge Road, Southall, Middlesex.

**Deletions** – SP&S Records Ltd, Wharf Road, Stratford, London E15 2SU.

Finally, here's our list of six "best buys" (excluding the Giganti del Jazz series):

- Sidney Bechet: *Collector's Edition Vol I* (Joker SM 3571)
- Charlie Christian: *Live at Minton's* (Jazz Anthology JA 5122)
- Chick Corea/Woody Shaw (Europa 1003)
- Dizzy Gillespie at Massey Hall (Joker SM 3784)
- Billie Holiday: *Georgia on My Mind* (Joker SM 3966)
- Rex Stewart–Cootie Williams (Jazz Anthology JA 5201)

By shopping around, you could get all six for about £13.50 – not much more than the price of the average Japanese import.



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CHARLIE PARKER	Sessions Vol. 1	LION BLP	£2.95
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- SJP 211 ENRICO PIERANUNZI TRIO
- SJP 215 TOON ROOS QUARTET

# MUSA SUSO

**Charles de Ledesma** discovers how SUSO, master of the ancient African Griot tradition, met Don Cherry and Herbie Hancock and made musical magic.

FODAY MUSA SUSO is an extraordinary, thirty-year-old kora player from Gambia. His is one of a cluster of ancient families of the Griot clan – all his family's males have, since Jalamadi Suso in the sixteenth century, played kora and most of the women have sung. It is through these families of master musicians that the oral history of the Mandingo people has been transmitted.

Suso: "I started learning the kora when I was five. Each song I play has its lyrical accompaniment. The stories are mostly about Mandingo kings, traditional families, places, incidents. Griot families like ours don't just entertain but are the custodians of Mandingo history."

Although Jalamadi Suso first brought the kora into his family four centuries ago, plucked bows – early koras – have been around since the eleventh century and have been a vital musical/oral code feature throughout the expansion of the Mali Empire.

Suso: "It was 900 years ago when our people spread out from Mali into the regions which are now called Senegal, Gambia, Guinea, Bissau, Ivory Coast, Sierra Leone, Liberia and Ghana. As our people spread the songs, Griots sang – provided the service of keeping people abreast of old and new developments. You could say that Griots' musical/lyrical material ranged from mythic tales to the equivalent of newspaper cuttings."

At twenty-one Musa Suso was playing to packed concerts in Gambia. The next year, 1976, he accepted a position at the University of Accra in Ghana. By the end of that year he'd decided to pack up his koras and move to the United States.

Suso: "Since I was small I wanted to play the kora for the whole world to hear it. I saw lots of records coming out from the US so I decided to go there to form a band. I just happened to pick Chicago, maybe because I know Adam Rudolph – I'd met him whilst he was travelling in Ghana. As soon as I arrived, Adam and I formed the Mandingo Griot Society."

Suso had clearly picked a good time to arrive in the US. The previous year, author Alex Haley had travelled to Gambia and had got to know an eminent Griot family as part of research for his Roots series. Although Haley had not met Suso at that point (Suso being in Accra), the kora-player benefited from Roots bringing the role of the ancient instrument to America's attention. Within two weeks of arriving in Chicago, Suso was on Public Access TV, playing concerts – first, solo kora but, soon, with The Society.

Conga-player Adam Rudolph helped collect like-minded musicians for the band – bassist Joseph Thomas, drummer Hank Drake and guitarist John Markis. Within six months, a deal was set up with Flying Fish records and the first, quite brilliant, eponymously named Society LP came out. Stunning tracks like "Mamanah" and "Appollo" placed the kora's extraordinary range – from inscriber of ancient, delicate melody to a transmitter for fluid, golden improvising – firmly within a multi-rhythmic and quasi-electric context. Other tracks, like "Janjungo" and "Sounds For The Bush", captured Suso singing and playing 300-year-old Mandingo stories. But the album's golden moments spotlighted Suso deftly improvising with none other than Don Cherry.

Suso: "Don flew over from Sweden to play with us. A Swedish friend of mine, Beta, knew him there and, as he played



Musa Suso — Mandingo messenger

the six-stringed West African instrument – the dsungoni, he was keen to meet and play with us. He stayed for a while in Chicago recording and playing quite a few concerts with us."

Between 1977 and 1980 The Society toured all over US and Europe. In 1981, they released their second album, *Mighty Rhythm*. Less frenetic than, but as powerful as the first, Suso's masterful touch and fantastic timing was amply displayed on the updating of traditional Griot tunes, while the percussion set up a pleasing spontaneous and rather ragged opposition.

Surprisingly, it wasn't until last year that a prominent label made a firm arrangement with Suso and his band. (By that point, John Markis had been replaced by guitarist Abdul Hakeem, and singers Isabou Walker and Nora Harris had joined.) Celluloid's Bill Laswell realised the kora's incredible potential and the strategy for utilising Suso's talents, both as a session musician and as group leader/composer, began to unfold.

"In January 1984 I took a demo to Celluloid and Bill asked if I'd like to play with Herbie Hancock. He said he'd programmed a drum-machine for a track and did I have any ideas for overlaying kora on it. I said yes and so we met up in LA and made *Olympic Songs*. I returned to Chicago but was soon back in LA to work on *Sound System*. Then I toured Japan with the Rockit band and, while there, Herbie and I recorded an LP's worth of kora and piano duets which were mostly my compositions. Next, it was back to Chicago to work on the Mandingo Society LP *Watso Sitta* and on to New York to record it with Bill producing and Herbie guesting."

*Watso Sitta* is a total reconciliation of kora and American rhythms. No traditional tracks are included this time but glittery kora passages are folded perfectly into a brisk airy funk mix, and the inclusion of rich, female voices both incorporates soul feel and is the necessary balance for Suso's chant-repartée.

Currently in Paris playing on Manu Dibango's and Toure Kunda's albums, we can expect to see Suso featuring on the soon-to-be-released duets with Hancock and on the next Material LP.

Suso's music's strength and charm has had both the durability of history and the more recent American boost to help keep it alive. But its resilience is one seasoned by eleven centuries of troubadouring.

It seems likely that the legacy of kora-trotting is to be very much activated in the next few years courtesy of Suso.

# BOOK REVIEWS

## SIGNED SEALED AND DELIVERED: TRUE LIFE STORIES OF WOMEN IN POP

by Sue Steward and Sheryl Garratt  
(PLUTO PRESS, LONDON, £5.95)

AT LAST, a serious attempt to document women's participation in all aspects of the music industry. Women as instrumentalists, singers, managers, record and TV producers, sound engineers, DJs; working in the offices or on the factory floor at EMI; women as fans and groupies and teenyboppers. The authors interviewed women involved in all types of music from pop to rock to blues to jazz. Their analysis of women's oppression and resistance within the music business is quite complex and subtle, and always accessible.

Clothes and style are tackled head-on in the first two chapters. This might seem a paradox in a book dedicated to treating women seriously as musicians. The fact is, a woman musician's success or failure is often determined more by the visual image she adopts (or has foisted upon her) than by her musical skill. Many women "survive" in pop only at the expense of their human dignity. Some collapse under the strain. Others assert

themselves wittily through their image – by parodying the ultra-feminine – like Dolly Parton, experimenting with "masculine" attire – like Patti Smith, or juggling with images from former eras – like Poly Styrene: tongue-in-cheek tactics which draw attention to the very notions of "femininity" and "attractiveness".

There are good chapters on women as instrumentalists and vocalists in lots of different kinds of music. Black women's contribution and experiences are, for once, integrated into the discussion, rather than marginalised or exoticised. There are, however, two major omissions.

First, there is no detailed discussion on lyrics – either sung by or aimed at women. This could be a book in itself, and let us hope it will be, before long.

Second, there is no mention of the invisibility of lesbians within the music business. This is particularly disappointing in a book which

devotes so much space to discussing the images women musicians project. Why is there no female equivalent to Bronski Beat or Tom Robinson? None of the many lesbian musicians who have reached the charts has yet felt able to come out, which shows the extent to which women musicians are still strait-jacketed by the need for male approval in a male-dominated industry.

Despite these reservations, I think *Signed Sealed and Delivered* is very valuable: well produced and designed, copiously illustrated, thorough, intelligent and good-humoured. Inspiring for aspiring women musicians and technicians; satisfying for women who've been battling in the business for a long time, and challenging for sceptical men.

Lucy Whitman

*Lucy Whitman – a founder-member of Rock Against Racism and Rock Against Sexism – has been a regular music reviewer for Spare Rib and has performed with the women's band Sole Sister.*

## CONDITIONS OF MUSIC

by Alan Durant

(MACMILLAN, LONDON, £25 H/B, £7.95 P/B)

THIS BOOK has virtually nothing in it about jazz or improvised music, although Eddie Prévost's help is acknowledged and a photograph of Keith Rowe illustrates a phase of the development of the guitar. But *Conditions of Music* deserves the attention of those concerned with music criticism in any genre and with the distribution of cultural resources between different types of music. Readers will probably come away with more questions than answers, though, as this is a frustratingly speculative work.

Alan Durant is a lecturer in English Studies at the University of Strathclyde and the book is part of a series entitled *Language, Discourse and Culture*, the editors of which include Colin MacCabe. With such a pedigree, passages of dense impenetrability, in which the author wrestles with "contextualisation" and "positioning", are to be expected and, if you like that sort of stuff, there's plenty of it here. But it would be rash to dismiss Durant's academic prose out of hand – it is often the bearer of ideas of real weight.

The book is in two parts. In the first, Durant develops positions critical of current ways of writing about music, while in the second he seeks to apply them. His target consists principally of dominant notions of the values of classical music – values which are narrow, unhistorical and self-justifying. He calls into question that view of music history

which constructs its subject as a corpus of great works, focussing its interest on issues of style and technique internal to the music. Such accounts leave out the audience, performance conventions, indeed the whole social, economic and political circumstances in which music is created. The orchestra and symphony concert are represented as the outcome of a process – part evolutionary, part the work of great men. Durant, on the other hand, wishes to demonstrate that more was involved than Romantic genius – itself an idea specific to a particular state of nineteenth-century society.

The musical establishment is exceptionally conservative in response to such suggestions, which find greater resonance in criticism of literature and the visual arts. It is easy enough to envisage self-interested bases for this – the privileged access of opera, chamber music etc to cultural patronage is the more easily defended if they can be upheld as repositories of timeless insights. But Durant prefers to locate resistance to a genuinely critical writing about music in a widely held belief in the non-referentiality of music – that is, the belief that music is genuinely abstract art or, in so far as it has emotional effect, possesses a unique directness of expression which bypasses the division between form and content. Such a quasi-religious view of music is rejected by the author who

suggests that social convention, governing both the conditions under which composition, publication, performance and, in our century, recording take place, and musical education in its widest sense, are an integral part of the generation of musical meanings. Put another way, musical meanings are culture specific and there is no natural universal musical language. In neglecting such issues as historically changing perceptions of dissonance, or the fundamental importance of spectacle in musical performance, dominant ways of writing about music obscure the real nature of musical communication.

Unfortunately, Alan Durant's case studies do not adequately mobilise his theoretical insights – perhaps inevitably given the magnitude of such a project. The chapter on Rock Music adds nothing to existing accounts of the social production of music in that genre and, throughout the book, Durant is inhibited by his reliance on old-style musicology for his data. But for all that, *Conditions of Music* is a valuable ally in the campaign to assert the cultural worth of musics whose conventions are not those of European art music. At the same time, it serves as a warning not to carry out that task in terms of musical absolutes and canons of great works parallel to those whose rule has been so oppressive hitherto.

Jeremy Crump



Charlie Barnet and orchestra as featured in the 1946 film *Idea Girl* for Universal Pictures.

## THOSE SWINGING YEARS: THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF CHARLIE BARNET

With Stanley Dance

(LOUISIANA STATE UNIVERSITY PRESS, BATON ROUGE & LONDON, £18.95 H/B)

AN ODD case, Charlie Barnet. Through the Thirties this tenor-playing bandleader was a mystifying figure to young jazz collectors seeking full knowledge of an arcane art. He was reputed to be rich, romantic, a playboy, but one steeped in jazz wisdom; moreover, a white musician, he was a self-confessed disciple of Hawkins, Hodges, Ellington and Basie and, therefore, someone to admire beyond the bounds of such actual aural evidence as came our way. He was nicknamed "Mad Mab", was much married and given wild exploits, and we heard he'd played the Apollo and was esteemed by black audiences. All good stuff.

On records, such as the 1934 sides with Red Norvo's Septet and some "commercials" by his own band, I remember finding him mildly disappointing. In the Forties, his image improved; his was a true swing orchestra, using

talented arrangers and a few useful soloists, and the leader proved to be a driving player himself while never making the top grade. So it went on, the solo strength benefiting from the employment of fiery blowers like Peanuts Holland, Roy Eldridge, Maynard Ferguson and Clark Terry. In the Fifties, Barnet disbanded and re-formed more often. He could afford to do so, since work appears not to have been an imperative in his life. Was there a dilettante touch here? We must conclude from this autobio that few wealthy young men would have dedicated themselves to jazz as Charles Daly Barnet did, or had the personality to do it.

The book takes us through his life – in and out of music, and about six marriages (I lost count), in and out of a great many brothels, in and finally out of a hard-boozing habit. Barnet – guided by a sympathetic Dance hand – pulls few punches, so far as I can guess, and emerges as a clay-footed hero.

Barnet/Dance cover most material things of concern to jazz buffs: the innumerable comings and goings worldwide; the organisation and shaping of many bands and the employment of scores of notable players and singers; the cock-ups and successes; the hits and

headlines; and the vicissitudes of road life with its juicing, whoring, fighting, joking and casually won musical rewards. I'd have relished more insights into Lucky Charlie's jazz style – the soprano-led reeds and scoring for six trumpets etc – and the effects of hiring lions like Trummy Young, Charlie Shavers et Al (Killian). Barnet's unprejudiced methods did him credit, though he disclaims any do-gooding intentions, and he was clearly a good judge of jazz-flesh.

This racial "blind-eye" policy is one of several contradictions in CB's nature and the book left me with ambivalent feelings towards a half-fellow carouser and practical joker whose inherited silver spoonful gave him a lifetime's freedom and economic clout. Me, I dislike boxing, fishing and most of Charlie's pastimes and tedious pranking, but I love his devotion to jazz and don't much mind his conservative, rather superficial opinions on the music, which would give Max Harrison an attack of the vapours. So it is a book for all scholars to add to the shelves and a fairly amusing read for others. One final puzzle: why was Barnet the Mad Mab and the Wild Mab of Fishpond fame? (Answers on a postcard, please – Ed.)

Max Jones

CHARLIE "BIRD" PARKER died on 12 March, 1955, aged thirty-five having carved a large piece of jazz history for himself. No other single figure before or since has exerted a greater influence on his contemporaries and on successive generations of musicians.

A continuous umbilical cord runs from Parker through the last forty years of jazz history attached to every major figure from Sonny Stitt in the Forties to David Sanborn in the Eighties. But how do we assess Parker's cruelly short career and long legacy?

In this special feature, we examine Parker's life, his recordings and influence on his own and later generations, via the words of writers whose involvement with jazz covers the span of "Bird's" musical presence.



# CHARLIE PARKER (1920–1955)

## *The Brilliance of Bird*

Brian Priestley looks at the unique place in history that is forever to belong to CHARLIE PARKER.

ARGUING about who is the greatest jazz musician ever is a pretty pointless exercise, at the best of times. But the name of Charlie Parker is mentioned so often in exactly this way that some explanation may be called for.

If you take it for granted that emotional impact is what distinguishes great jazz from merely good jazz, then even a cursory listen to the Bird is liable to cut through whatever else may have been preoccupying you. And significantly, the more familiar (or bored?) you become with the general stylistic area in which he was operating, the greater the impact of Parker compared to most other bebop performers.

The viewpoint of his contemporaries themselves was, naturally, coloured by the priorities of practising musicians — priorities such as control over the instrument, freedom to respond instantly to the inspiration of the moment, and originality (ie ability to give colleagues some new challenges to think about). For the combination of all these, musicians both did — and still do — rate Parker as irreplaceable and unsurpassable and, over the years, musicians' opinions and listeners' opinions have steadily reinforced each other to the extent that his excellence is now accepted rather than experienced.

But a closer look brings us face to face with the full force of his achievement. For a start, the speed with which he got his act together is truly remarkable. Biographer Ross Russell makes a sketchy remark about the altoist's father being a musical influence, but this is no more than hopeful glasswork, undercut by Parker's father leaving home before Bird



reached the age of ten and the fact that, by his own admission, he didn't become really involved in music until he was about thirteen. Until then, there was only the generalised influence of European music at school (and pretty square examples of it, too) and the "environmental" sounds of the ghetto, which together trained his ears before he had any instrument on which to train his fingers. But, as soon as he started playing the alto in high school and associating with older boys already into improvisation, there was no stopping him.

He was giggling with friends at fourteen (and claiming to be eighteen), while a year later he was promising enough to join the band of an established Kansas City alto-player, Tommy Douglas. Before Parker turned sixteen, he had tried sitting in with Lester Young and Jo Jones – unsuccessfully, as it happens, but his ambition is revealing – and the summer he became seventeen, he learned all the solos on the early Lester Young records, by ear. From this moment on, according to his associates, he had the basics of his style down and anything else he heard that he wanted to incorporate (Buster Smith's tone and turn of phrase, Art Tatum's vast harmonic knowledge) he seemed to assimilate effortlessly. When you read of Coltrane "on one occasion, in the height of his career, [practising] exclusively the C major scale for eleven straight hours" (Jerry Coker: *Listening to Jazz*), it's staggering to realise that, from the age of seventeen, Parker had no further need to practise. He merely played and astounded everyone who heard him.

It was almost too easy, and that – in a sense – was the problem of being Charlie Parker. Certainly, he posed musical challenges for others – and a whole generation of neo-boppers is still working them out now – but who could challenge him? He was full of enthusiasm, initially, when he became a founder member of the Jay McShann big band in 1940 (not 1939, as Russell has it), and he made a notable contribution to its streamlined but blues-based output, but the enthusiasm had run out by early 1942 when the band deposited him on the thriving experimental scene of New York.

The compromises involved in big-band work palled even more quickly during his two remaining such jobs, despite his kinship with a number of the overlapping personnel assembled by, first, Earl Hines and, then, Billy Eckstine, including especially one Dizzy Gillespie. As far as stretching out was concerned, it was down to after-hours sessions at the in-crowd places like Minton's and the, then, more-renowned Monroe's, with Gillespie and people such as Monk, Oscar Pettiford and Kenny Clarke. But even these co-founders of bop were fairly clear-sighted about Bird's superiority at putting their ideas into practice.

Here, it's relevant to mention Parker's drug addiction. He may have been al-

"The first time I heard Bird was on that record from the Massey Hall concert. And I tell you, man, I was scared to death . . ." – Joe Zawinul

"I played with Parker when I was 18, fresh out of high school. I still haven't recovered . . ." – Hampton Hawes

ways ready to stretch out musically but the impossibility of being stretched by others seemed, for him, to invite the inevitability of becoming strung-out physically. Whatever the reason, he seems to have consciously chosen to pursue the latter; if will-power had been all that was required to avoid the catastrophic consequences, then the self-discipline which had ensured such musical mastery in the space of four years would have been proof against any urge to self-destruction.

Whether you blame the emotional scars of his childhood or the more general injustices of society, there was an internal void which needed to be filled and which, already by his late teens, had produced quite marked anti-social behaviour ("psychopathic" is the word used by some observers). So, although intellectually he spoke out against the use of drugs, not even that lively and inquisitive intellect could fill the void or prevent him becoming more widely known (during his lifetime) as a junkie than as a musician.

He may have been preceded in this respect (according to Gillespie) by Tommy Stewenson (trumpeter with Jimmie Lunceford and other name bands) who died an early death in 1944, and, of course, Billie Holiday's addiction was more or less contemporary with his own, but at least after her trial and imprisonment in 1947 she could be seen more clearly as a victim. Bird, on the other hand, didn't play like a victim and, although hospitalised after a breakdown, seemed to have miraculous powers of recovery to match his super-human musical abilities. More often than not,

the two factors worked together and even the infamous "Lover Man" solo of 1946 makes sense, even though the physical and mental reflexes involved were almost at breaking-point. And, alongside the acknowledged classics of his late-Forties recordings, there are eye-witness accounts of Parker being in no fit state to play and yet playing, not just adequately, but brilliantly.

Normally, in fact, whenever he was involved in music-making, his concentration was 101 per cent. The inimitable (or, at least, never successfully duplicated) diamond-like tone and the internal rhythms of his lines always carried complete conviction, even when new inspiration may have been lacking. For, of course, like all improvisers he had his favourite phrases, as is readily shown by comparing his different recordings of "Cherokee" (some of them named "Koko"); the contents are often very similar but the commitment to spontaneous expression is constant and, as a result, so is the intensity of each new performance.

An even clearer test-case is the series of tunes based on "I Got Rhythm": from the 1944 "Red Cross" to "Kum" (which, in 1952, was the next-to-last piece of original Parker material he ever recorded) – the similarity of the improvised solos is striking but the internal rhythms are so flexible that self-quotation is never merely self-quotation. The dazzling variations are those of the kaleidoscope, not the drawing-board.

Yet, Parker himself was frustrated, not just by society but by his music. Ignoring the thrill he invariably gave to the converted, and not temperamentally inclined

A rare shot of Parker with Max Roach and Kenny Clarke at the Jazz Festival of Paris in 1949.



MAX JONES COLLECTION

# Early Bird

**Charles Fox surveys Parker's background and hears from JAY McSHANN about the days when Parker toured with his big band.**

to wait for everyone else to catch up, he was perhaps far too aware that he was repeating himself. His contact with the classic forms of European music – dating from after he moved to New York – undoubtedly fuelled the unfocussed and unfulfilled desire to create something more "significant" than the music described by those demeaning words "jazz" and "bebop".

Hence, the role he took in initiating projects realised by Norman Granz featuring him with strings or with woodwinds and voices. But the arrangements would have needed to be far more challenging, their gestation and rehearsal time far longer – just as the drummers on the Afro-Cuban sessions would have needed to be far more flexible and jazz-oriented – for any satisfactory outcome in this direction. Ultimately, it only added to his frustration that the short-lived novelty value of "Bird With Strings" made the 78 rpm single of "Just Friends" and "April in Paris" the biggest-selling record of his brief lifetime.

Since his death, of course, the balance has righted itself. All the studio recordings have been re-issued and re-re-issued, and the flood of live tapes has only served to confirm Parker's pre-eminence. In one way, however, he is still frustrated so long as that very pre-eminence ensures not so much attentive listening as abject lip-service. It would be fitting if this thirtieth anniversary of his passing, which comes at a time of greater awareness and acceptance of bebop than ever before, focussed attention not on his undoubted charisma or his street credibility but on his creativity. ■

#### DETAILS OF MENTIONED RECORDINGS:

- "Lover Man" – Charlie Parker CP 505.
- "Koko" and "Red Cross" – Savoy Sjl 2201.
- "Cherokee" – Spotlite SPJ120, SPJ123 etc.
- "Kim" – Verve 817.448-1 (see also "Thriving on a Riff", "Moose the Mooche", "Anthropology", etc).
- "Just Friends" and "April in Paris" – Verve 817.442-1.



The Jay McShann Band at the Savoy Ballroom in 1941 — L to R.: Bob Mabane, Bird, John Jackson and Freddy Culver.

GENIUS is a word that critics should use very cautiously. Perhaps only two jazz musicians qualify undeservedly to have the epithet applied to them: Louis Armstrong and Charlie Parker, overwhelming in their impact upon fellow musicians, possessing imaginations unfettered by the conventions of the periods when they surfaced.

Most vitally of all, perhaps, both give the impression – Armstrong in the Twenties and Thirties, Parker throughout the whole of a brief lifetime – of creating freshly each time they raised their instruments to their lips. It posits a kind of artistic innocence, free of self-consciousness, almost a natural force rather than a human trait. But to accept that, of course, would be to ignore the hard work that both men put in.

It is hard to speculate upon what might have happened had Louis Armstrong not fired that .38 pistol on New Year's Eve. He would not have been sent to the Coloured Waifs' Home in New Orleans, never been shown how to play the cornet by Peter Davis. And even if, as one of his biographers – John Lincoln Collier – points out, Armstrong was never taught to triple tongue, at least he moved into

jazz with an adequate technique at his command.

Not so Charlie Parker, even if, at the age of eleven, he was playing the baritone horn in the band at Kansas City's Lincoln High School. Two years later, his mother bought him a battered alto saxophone. Yet although Parker was to start using his ears, slipping into the Reno Club to hear Count Basie's band – and especially the saxophone-playing of Lester Young, he was slow to achieve any facility at improvising himself.

No major jazz musician can have admitted to such woeful incompetence as Charlie Parker did, when – interrupted regularly by the giggling of a girlfriend – he was interviewed on radio many years later:

"I learned how to play the first eight bars of 'Lazy River' and I knew the complete tune of 'Honeysuckle Rose', " he said, "but I never stopped to think about keys, nothing like that. So I took my horn out to this joint where Jimmy Keith's band was working. The first thing they started playing was 'Body and Soul'. They laughed me off the bandstand. They laughed at me so hard I had to leave the club." Yet embarrassment of that calibre did not inhibit the young saxophonist but spurred him on, encourag-



ing him to become eventually perhaps the most formidably equipped of all soloists, able to operate not only in the keys preferred by jazz players but in every possible key.

He began working in the band led by Tommy Douglas, a conservatory-trained musician (Brian Priestley - Parker's most recent biographer - has suggested that it was Douglas who introduced Parker to the technical expertise of saxophonists such as Jimmy Dorsey and the French "straight" virtuoso, Marcel Mule).

Parker carried his alto saxophone everywhere he went, wrapped in a paper bag, eager to sit in, anxious to be accepted by the competitive Kansas City musicians. But a further humiliation awaited him. That was when, sometime late in 1936 or early 1937, he joined a group of Basie's musicians and took a solo - only to have Jo Jones hurl a cymbal on the floor.

The period of intense study that followed was crucial to Parker's development. He spent the summer of 1937 at a resort in the Ozark mountains, working with George E. Lee's band, swotting up on harmony, practising incessantly, and playing and re-playing the Count Basie records that had just begun to be released. When he returned to Kansas City musicians who knew him were bowled over by the progress he had made.

"I THOUGHT I'd met all the musicians in Kansas City," Jay McShann told me, sitting in a flat in London's Dean Street, both of us munching slices of a huge birthday cake McShann had been given the evening before. "But one night I was passing one of the clubs. And you know when a guy is blowing into a microphone the sound comes outside. I heard this sound and it was different. So I went into the club. When Bird had finished his solo I went over and said, 'Man, where are you from?' 'I'm from Kansas City,' he said, 'but I went out of town with George Lee's band, down in the Ozarks. It's hard to get musicians to go to the Ozarks because not much is happening there. But that's where I've been, doing three months' woodshedding'."

How Charlie Parker was playing in those early days can only be guessed from the recollection of musicians like Jay McShann. Nothing exists on record until the transcriptions made by McShann's band - with Parker among the saxophones - for radio station KFBI in Wichita in November and December 1940. On at least a couple of those recordings, I suggested - including, perhaps inevitably, "Lady Be Good" - Parker phrases just like Lester Young.

McShann nodded. "He did, he idolised Lester," he said. "But I think his greatest idol was really Prof - Buster Smith. You know I can remember when Buster was playing a job in Kansas City and the woman running the club wouldn't raise his salary. So Buster didn't show up on

the job and somebody said, 'We'll get Charlie Parker'. There used to be a twenty- or thirty-minute broadcast from that club. And I was listening to it. Back in those days - you know, around 1938 and 1939 - you knew a person by his sound. And I thought I had pretty good ears. But when I heard Bird that night I thought I was listening to Buster Smith."

Smith was highly respected in Kansas City circles, which explains his nickname of "Prof", short for Professor. A tantalising figure in jazz history, he is sparsely represented on record, especially at the time when he would have been influencing Parker (he takes short solos on a couple of tracks - "Cherry Red" and "Baby, Look At You" - recorded in New York in the summer of 1939 by Pete Johnson's Boogie Woogie Boys, a group packed with Kansas City musicians.)

Anybody who has glimpsed the minimal amount of film showing Charlie Parker in action will be aware that he possessed charm, a handy asset for anyone burdened with such a chaotic lifestyle. Mac Roach has recollectcd how, in the mid-Forties, Parker would turn up to stay at the Roach home in Bedford-Stuyvesant: "My mother always thought Bird a nice boy because whenever she came in the room he opened the Bible and began reading it. He was great at sweet-talking her."

McShann agrees, with a chuckle, but insists that "As well as being a charmer he took care of business, too. After we got the big band together Bird used to rehearse the reed section and he was pretty strict with those guys. If they didn't show up, or if things were going wrong, he'd be down on them. He did a beautiful job".



Although Parker had visited New York in 1940, staying at Buster Smith's apartment, he had lacked the confidence to sit in with local musicians. When he returned two years later, to play with Jay McShann's band at the Savoy Ballroom, the situation was very different. (At that time the furthest-out player in New York was Rudy Williams, a disciple of Willie Smith who had strayed a little further harmonically and, for some years, had worked in that exciting but rough-and-ready group, the Savoy Sultans.)

I asked McShann about the reaction of New York musicians, always reputed to have something of a superiority complex, never disposed to believe that out-of-town players had anything to teach them. McShann's response was immediate.

"You know Benny Webster used to go down on 52nd Street and tell the cats: 'Man, all you guys who call yourselves saxophone-players had better get up to the Savoy and see this young cat with Hootie from Kansas City.' You guys think you can play saxophone, Benny would say; 'You'd better go up there and go to school.' Quite naturally that made them mad, you know. You don't say things like that to cats who own 52nd Street, New York. Benny told us later how he would stand in a corner at the Savoy. And he saw all those musicians coming in, sneaking round and hiding from each other."

The glee Jay McShann had felt forty-odd years before bubbled up again. He slapped his knees and laughed. Geniuses, after all, have rarely been dullards and making history is never as solemn as it seems. ■

"Nobody ever excited me like Bird . . ." - Johnny Griffin

"I didn't never hear no break like that. Incredible. Like chickens flying all over the place, man . . ." - Tony Scott

"He was the blues . . ." - Eddie "Cleanhead" Vinson

"I was very awed by his presence . . ." - Ahmad Jamal

# Up Against the Wall

**Jeff Tempo** opens a text book and finds that, in jazz, things are never quite as "black and white" as they seem...

THAT TAKES the cake: if you open Volume Nine of the venerable "Grove" dictionary – this bible of musicology – to page 572, you discover a masterpiece of almost heroic proportions. There, on the bottom half of the page – sandwiched in an article on "Jazz" – is a picture. A seemingly quite normal photograph, a snapshot from the everyday world of jazz: Charlie Parker playing in a club, together with his band.

Anyone who has something to do with jazz is familiar with this picture. On the right side we see Bird in a white suit, the black giant's face showing deep lines of concentration, raising his instrument for a nervous flight over changes. At front centre, with his back to the great master, Thelonious Monk sits at the piano, stoically scrutinising a half-empty cocktail glass as though thinking, "I wonder if Nellie would let me have just another little swig?" At left rear a grouchy Zeus on the bass, Charlie Mingus, staring out into the public a bit hysterically, as if the incarnation of the Duke himself had just walked into the club. To the left, drummer Roy Haynes, his head tilted slightly to the side, his gentle smile seeming to bathe in the overtone brew of his cymbals. A perfectly normal picture from a not-very-normal day in jazz. Nothing more, nothing less.

But there's also a fifth man involved in the swinging playing portrayed in the Grove dictionary, a man we can't see in the picture. And right here is where the unusual, historic, even heroic deed begins. Our invisible fifth man is hidden completely in the background of the picture, and there – in the background – we see ... a wall painted white.

Wait a minute, you think – and you consult a photograph of the same gig from another publication – wait a minute, there's something different here. And it's true: while the Grove dictionary photo has the jazz artists performing in front of a white wall, the photos we compare it with show the Parker quartet in front of a wall-painting displaying two bare-breasted mermaids with nipples and voluminously full hips, lazing, somewhat lasciviously, in the surging waves of music.

The same day, the same gig, the same musicians. But in the Grove dictionary you can look for this opulent nymphal nakedness all you want; you won't find it. Instead, a perfectly average, chalky wall beckons in white innocence. And,



*Below: The scene, with wall-painting, as it really was. Above: The scene as the Grove dictionary wished it had been.*



all of a sudden, you're overwhelmed by the virtuosity with which our fifth anonymous man has wielded his retouching brush. A masterpiece, the wall redone in white, and so carefully that a loudspeaker cable leading across the wall wasn't painted over - giving the picture greater authenticity, of course.

The intentions of our artist-in-white must have been almost ingenious. For, pardon me, but what place could that languid, suggestive ambience possibly have in this exalted scholarly work? Here it's music which is the main subject of inquiry. How could an honourable musicologist possibly be interested in the fact that jazz once sucked at the teat of questionable professions? What does he care that jazz once made its first faltering steps not far away from the bedposts of ecstatic diversions? And does a well-established professor of musicology need to know anything of the fact that jazz - before it was led to its first holy communion at the altar of middle-class concert culture in venerated Carnegie Hall, its locks carefully done up in prim swing-curls by a godfather named Benedict Goodman - that jazz also podded its pants once?

No, the Grove people have recognised the fact that jazz has to be clean. Nobody is likely to criticise our master artist of musical grace for having dissolved all of jazz's inferiority complexes in a single, antiseptic stroke of white. On the contrary: when we consider the artistic finesse with which he displays his Mr Clean handicraft we feel moved to cheer him on to even greater deeds.

For instance, how about smoothing out the annoying wrinkles of Charlie Parker's suit-coat with a few daring swishes of the brush? And these signs of exertion in the face of the alto saxophonist. Do they really belong there? Couldn't they be made a little less severe? And then Mingus, the old sour-puss! Our graphic artist might find totally new vistas opened up to him if he could just use his paint and brush to bring a charming carnival grin to the bass-player's face! Or - not such a far-fetched idea - how would it be if our painter just had a UFO land on the podium next to Parker with little green men exiting, antennae poking out of their heads in amazement? The recommended picture caption for the respectable readers of Grove: "Extraterrestrial creatures at their first encounter with the world's most beautiful music". How about that for an idea?

And, as long as we're on the subject of virtuoso applications of colour: why so stingy with the retouching brush? Let's not take any false modesty! The idea seems almost irresistible: why not spread the wall's captivating white glow to the sweating faces of the four coloured musicians? That might solve a whole bag of problems, that would make the whole affair so much more dignified! We, for our part, are quite eager to discover what other works our facial touch-up artist might come up with on behalf of the



Grove dictionary.

And may we lend a few hopeful words of encouragement to the anonymous white giant: keep up the good work! Wash the face of music history down to its pores! Of course, all for the sake of musicology, all for the sake of jazz. ■

"No other saxophonist had sounded like that to me ..." -  
B.B. King

# Bird – Studio Versus Live!

**Greg Murphy indulges in a session of fascinating and, ultimately, enlightening listening . . .**

FOR THOSE of us too young to have heard Charlie Parker during his lifetime, there remains the blessing of the many recordings made by the innovative alto-saxophonist. But perhaps that blessing is a mixed one, for the scope of those recordings is now vast indeed, covering both studio sessions and more casual music captured by various means at concerts, clubs or off the radio.

Much of this has appeared on record at various times and has raised the intriguing question as to whether Parker was more effective within the discipline of a recording studio, or when he could stretch out playing in public.

In his fourteen-year recording career – from those first radio transcriptions made at a Wichita radio station in 1940 until his final session in the studio in March 1954 – Parker recorded studio sides for three main companies: Dial, Savoy and Verve. The Dial sides – arguably his finest – have passed from owner to owner and issued and re-issued without any rhyme or reason, until Tony Williams gathered literally everything that has survived on a six-album set on his Spotlite label.

The Savoy sides were scattered over a number of Savoy albums, until that label was bought by Arista in the early Seventies and began a massive re-issue programme. As a result, almost every Parker Savoy side was issued in a box set and a double album containing all master takes was also issued.

French Verve, of course, have just made available again all of Parker's recordings for that label on eight separate albums which include the excursions with strings, big bands, reunion sessions with Gillespie and Monk and some eccentric sides with a choir.

So, with the Dial sides still available on Spotlite and the Verve recordings also to hand, the cup begins to overflow, even if availability of the Savoy sides is uncertain – although they may become available through French RCA shortly. And this is before the legions of "public" recordings are taken into account. If we are to make any sense out of our original question, we must be selective.

The studio recordings were, almost without exception, carried out within the three-minute limit that constituted the playing time of a 78 rpm record, the



Recording history — the Dial Sessions, 19 February, 1947. L. to R.: Bird, Ross Russell, Harold West (in background), Earl Coleman and Red Callender

masters being cut into a wax or glass-based disc. In those pre-magnetic tape days – with no prospect of splicing, dubbing etc – everything had to be right which is why alternative "takes" exist that were rejected for one reason or another at the time but which may have contained a superior Parker solo. Consider the three versions of "Night in Tunisia" recorded for Dial in March 1948. Although Parker's break from the aborted first take was issued as "The Famous Alto Break", breathtaking though it is, it is more restrained on the two succeeding complete takes. His solo is another matter – both takes have a solo of amazing fluency, from the first notes over the suspended rhythm until he commences a chorus which makes you wonder if his nickname Bird really was due to his liking for chicken. After the studio recording, there are two public versions on record, the most notable from the famous concert at Massey Hall in Toronto in May 1953. The four-bar break after the chorus is equal to any version Parker recorded, but the first chorus of his solo is an eerie experience. Parker places the notes in a manner that displays his mastery of time – it is as though his hold on the tempo is wavering, as if the next note will be disaster. Of

course, Parker knew exactly what he was doing and it is the listener who is disoriented to begin with, rather than Parker. And, in contrast to the studio recordings, there are several choruses, none quite reaching the level of the first, but a dazzling display of musical control. In the latter half of his contribution, for example, he seems to be slowing the tempo by his placement of notes, almost as if he is dropping behind the beat, and yet the notes are perfectly in accord with the rhythm laid down by bassist Charles Mingus and drummer Max Roach. A further example is taken from a broadcast from Birdland in March 1951 – a rare example of Parker appearing with trumpeter Dizzy Gillespie during the Fifties – where the break after the theme is also arresting but the solo is confined to one chorus, full of spattered high and low notes and that suspended feeling that is more evident on the Massey Hall concert.

Four takes survive for another Dial recording, "Cool Blues" recorded in February 1947. Unlike the majority of alternative takes, the music slows down as the takes proceed – this was because pianist Errol Garner complained that the tempo of the first two takes was uncomfortably fast and, indeed, the final two

takes benefit from the slowing in pace. My own favourite is the D take which has a lucid, methodical solo from Parker. A public version comes from a broadcast from Birdland - the New York jazz club named after Parker - recorded in June 1950 with such heavy company as trumpeter Fats Navarro. Here, Parker dissects the composition with a long searching solo but, perhaps significantly, at the same tempo of the final 1947 take. The impact of Parker's uncanny use of time is the significant feature of this solo, quite apart from the fierce exchanges of fours between Parker and Navarro.

In another version from 1949, Parker rips off the theme statement, anxious to improvise - which he does in the most uninhibited version I have heard. Chorus after chorus of subtle quotations, ripples of notes from top to bottom of the scale, with only a repeated riff to keep him on course before he slips back into the theme. So extrovert is this piece that it hardly matters that the sound quality virtually excludes the piano (Teddy Wilson?) and bass, and the drums are reduced to a muddy thump.

One could nominate other comparisons, notably "Scapple From The Apple" and "Ko Ko". Yet many others were scarcely played in public and you must take into account not only space for this article but record availability and sound quality. While the majority of the studio sides have good sound, as do some of the broadcasts, many others have suffered so from the passage of time as to be almost undecipherable.

As Parker moved away from the Dial and Savoy days and into a recording contract with Norman Granz - which was to realise the Verve sides - the live and studio recordings began to move apart in material. Parker's final years were troubled ones, his regular quintet gone for good, playing dates with the local rhythm section or a pick-up group arranged by Granz - hence the variety of musicians to be found on the live recordings of the time. Two 1953 examples include a version of "Groovin' High" with organist Milt Buckner and an appearance with the Hermanites, a small contingent from the Woody Herman band on the joke "Your Father's Moustache". But, above all, was the "Bird With Strings" concept. The studio recordings, in particular "Just Friends", had Parker rhapsodising over a string section and very effective, too. But Granz had the idea of a touring string section, whose rigid arrangements soon became frustrating for Parker. In his contribution to a concert at New York's Apollo Theatre in

"It was the alto saxophone at its finest hour . . ." - Art Pepper



Bird with Roy Eldridge.

August 1950, he seems to strain at the leash imposed by the strings, particularly on "Easy To Love".

In September 1952, Parker played at the Rockland Palace Dance Hall, and Audio Fidelity have issued a double album with additional material from the date, previously unheard. Pianist Walter Bishop has recalled that Parker would have the strings "lay out" from time to time - on that evening they must have spent more time "laying out" than playing, for, of the thirty-five titles known to have been played that night, only eight have the strings present. Sadly, this is where sound quality deteriorates - there are changes in pitch due to speeding up of the source material, clumsy splices and odd fades. But there's another wild "Cool Blues", Parker playing havoc with the strings on "Rocker" and two delightful latin items in "My Little Suede Shoes" and "Sly Mongoose", unavailable elsewhere.

Finally, the public recordings show elements of Parker that studio sessions could not. In 1952, Parker played several concerts with the Woody Herman Orchestra - foreign territory seemingly, yet the evidence is that he simply walked on stage and took control, with superb solos on such standard Herman material as "The Goof and I" and "Four Brothers". He did much the same with the formidable Stan Kenton Orchestra two years

later and to hear him soloing against the massed might of the Kenton Orchestra is simply amazing. But perhaps most interesting of all is his 1953 encounter with The Orchestra, a big band assembled by a group of Washington musicians who quickly acted as hosts to nationally known soloists. The results of Parker's encounter have now been made available on record and, again, it is his unerring musical quick-footedness that enables him to deal with material that must have been unfamiliar - if it had ever been rehearsed. Obviously in high spirits that night, he has a high time on "Light Green", with audacious quotes throughout his seven chorus solo. He even turns the tables on the band on a medley, persevering with a theme until the entire band follow him, instead of the arrangement!

As you will have gathered, there is so much to be learned in comparing live and studio recordings, and exploring the live recordings for their own values. It is my contention that while the studio discipline may have concentrated Parker's mind, it also limited him, as the inspired soloing on several currently available albums will show. Like every major musician, Parker had his pet licks, but although the musical story may have been the same, the manner of delivering it was infinitely different. ■

#### References

- All the Dial recordings are gathered in the definitive six-record set *Charlie Parker on Dial* (Spotlite 101-106 inclusive).
- Verve sides are available on French Verve (817442-1 to 817448-1).
- *Jazz At Massey Hall* was available as *Saga 8031* and as part of a now unavailable Prestige double album, *The Greatest Jazz Concert*, both of which might be found in the used record browsers, while the 1951 Birdland version of "Night in Tunisia" will shortly be issued on Charlie Parker CP 512, *Bird'n'Diz*.
- The 1950 version of "Cool Blues" is on *One Night in Birdland* (CBS 88250), with the 1949 version on Queen 002 which also has the Milt Buckner and Hermanite items.
- The 1950 Apollo Concert is on Charlie Parker CP503, with the Rockland Palace items on *Live at Rockland Palace* (Charlie Parker CP2-502).
- Parker's Woody Herman date is on Alasmic QRS2442, the Kenton as *Jazz Supreme 703* and Parker's encounter with The Orchestra as Elektra Musician (MUS K52359).
- In addition, a wealth of public material can be found on the excellent Spotlite label, and Charlie Parker Records have a number of such albums scheduled for issue this year.
- If you're new to Parker, you're advised to hear the studio dates first - this will allow your ears to compensate for the frequently inferior sound quality of the live issues.

"My first reaction to Bird? I'd like to have run away . . ." - Nat Pierce

"We all agreed that one day this would be the greatest saxophone player . . ." - Thad Jones

# Bird On Verve

Eight albums, recently released by French Polydor, usefully bring together all PARKER'S known recordings for the Mercury/Clef label.

Brian Davis unfolds this particularly interesting period in Bird's career.



Bird gets the point from Ray Brown.

Charlie Parker (foreground) with Charlie Shavers, Ben Webster and Ray Brown.



GENERALLY, it is accepted that the so-called Verve years of Charlie Parker's recording career are viewed with considerable ambivalence. Unlike the previous Dial and Savoy "years" which fall into a relatively simple format and thus invite one level of criteria, the six years under the Norman Granz Mercury/Clef aegis present a different story.

From November 1948 began a period during which some of Bird's greatest work would stand alongside his most ill-matched, his most glib and his poorest. Of course, anyone knowing the Parker history could be excused for thinking some of the sub-standard Clef output was due to his physical and/or mental condition at any given time yet, astonishingly (aside of the infamous "Lover Man" in 1946 and his final 1954 Clef dates), this rarely affected results. This is pretty surprising in itself but doubly so when you realise, at times during the period under scrutiny, he suffered some intensely traumatic spells, usually exacerbated by the ever-present on/off heroin addiction and advancing stomach ulceration.

In fact, Bird - ever the paradox - recorded two glorious bebop dates sounding full of hope and *joue-de-vivre* in January<sup>13</sup> and August 1951<sup>14</sup> (when addiction was high and the stomach a chronic problem). In the second (with his atonement for the aforesaid "Lover Man"), his tone is rich and dark and confidence abounds throughout. In spite of his personal debilitation, Bird was then at peace, albeit briefly, enjoying some fruits of his commercial success from the "with strings" sales, such as a comfortable apartment and a happy family life.

Certainly though, the March<sup>15</sup> and especially the December '54<sup>16</sup> session (with the intervening death of his infant daughter and an attempted suicide) starkly revealed his sick condition in the lack of inspiration and general disinterest which permeates both takes of "Love For Sale"<sup>17</sup> and "I Love Paris"<sup>18</sup>. These, with the slightly better March tracks, made up the - *Plays Cole Porter* album, not released until late 1956 as part of the inaugural batch of twelve-inch LPs with the label now changed to Verve.

So, what of the ill-matched, the glib but also the great moments? Prior to signing with Granz, Parker was in charge but now things were different. The Mer-

curious boss – purposeful and dogmatic, never failing to do his best for his artists materially – unfortunately exercised his prerogative as to what he thought was best for them musically.

In Bird's case this represented only a modicum of success. For instance, his first studio work was to add his solo voice – with little purpose in the event – to the already recorded "Repetition"<sup>1</sup> written and directed by Neal Hefti with a giant-sized conventional band plus large string section and Latin percussion. This was for Granz's Jazz Scene album to which Parker also added a wonderful quartet improvisation aptly entitled "The Bird"<sup>2</sup> containing a typically riveting solo. Next, Parker was featured soloist along with tenorist Flip Phillips in December 1948 with the Latin Jazz Orchestra of Machito. "No Noise - pt.II"<sup>3</sup> is a bit aimless (pt.I is excluded as this is solely Phillips), "Mango Mangue"<sup>4</sup> – a simple basic Latin theme – has inspired Parker, while the lively "Okiedoke"<sup>5</sup> is the best of the bunch. Overall, though, Bird sounds the added and slightly awkward attraction rather than integral to the exercise.

Completing the Latin "quarter", two years<sup>13</sup> later Bird was again to meet Machito, with Phillips plus Buddy Rich who, six months beforehand, had been an unhappy choice for a Parker Mercury date. This time it was a specially written suite in six movements by Chico O'Farrell, with Bird and Flip blowing against the might of the Machito brass and the relentless drive of the Afro-Cuban rhythm. The opening "Canción", after fierce brass stabs, is a gentle melody; "Mambo-I" has flying Bird; "Mambo-II" ballad Phillips; and, where the "Canción" theme reprises that wonderful "fat" saxophone section! "6/8" is a jumble; "Jazz" swings beautifully with Bird and Flip in high-speed chase but the ambience is spoilt by a bombastic and pointless Rich solo. The Afro-Cuban experiment had its exciting moments but, contrary to expectations, the records did little to attract a wider jazz public to Parker's music.

The Latin-percussion-with-jazz-small-group sessions (first released as – *Plays South of the Border*) were seen through in March 1951<sup>15</sup> and January 1952<sup>16</sup>, on neither of which, can it be said, Bird extended himself. Apart from "Why Do I Love You?" (three takes, the last two the better, where the Latin rhythm lays out during Parker's and pianist Bishop's solos), the selections are of Latin percussion with Bird eschewing out-and-out jazz improvisation in favour of closer-to-home melodic variations. Incidentally, Bishop's work – accompanying or solo – is particularly interesting especially in Bird's own "Little Suede Shoes"<sup>15</sup>. The second date had material equally dire but a livelier atmosphere prevailed, though the pioneering but inept Bennie Harris (trumpet) proved an embarrassing addition. Bird takes off only in "Begin The

#### Beguine"<sup>16</sup>.

Meanwhile, 1950 was apparently "Norman Granz for Buddy Rich Year" because, aside of the Afro-Cuban suite, the drummer was seconded to five other Parker sessions. Two were "with strings" so Bird was under wraps but was in full cry(!) on a relatively successful quartet date in Spring ("Star Eyes", "Blues (Fast)", "Mood For Love"), a brilliant two-track date in the October and a far from brilliant date which promised so much in the June<sup>17</sup>.

For this it was Dizzy and Bird reunited in the studio playing five bebop "heads" and a ballad but the outcome was moments of excellence from the two horn players and an excess of wasted potential. The fault was the rhythm section Thelonious Monk – a sympathetic accompanist only on his own music, the plodding bass of Curley Russell ... and Buddy, great drummer though he is, his Swing style sounding insensitive and thoroughly out of place. That October date, however, represents four-and-a-half minutes of the greatest of these volumes. In spite of, again, some heavy-handed bars from Buddy, "Celebrity"<sup>11</sup> is a brief one-and-a-half minutes of supreme Bird in spine-tingling form; so brief is this piece I suspect we come in half way with the first chunk missing. "Celebrity" is capped only by the next three minutes in reflective mood, Parker bluesy and emotional sandwiched between magisterial Coleman Hawkins – the themeless "Ballade"<sup>18</sup>.

Dealing with other indisputably top-notch dates, the two quintet sessions of 1951 stand out but arguably superior are the two quartets in December 1952<sup>19</sup> and July/August 1953<sup>20</sup>. The first with Hank Jones, Teddy Kotick and Max Roach producing four titles including the laid-back blues "Laird Baird"<sup>20</sup> and a headlong two takes of the themeless "I Got Rhythm" line, "Kim"<sup>20</sup>.

The second quartet had Al Haig, Percy Heath and Roach with Bird in blistering form. Three takes of a blues riff "Chi Chi", a singing "I Remember You", a buoyant "Now's The Time" and that piece of musical architecture "Confirmation" are milestones in the Parker discography. The 1953 one has the edge on the earlier which is food for thought inasmuch as, at that time, Bird was toiling night after night on tour with the strings outfit, bored out of his mind with the same limited repertoire, the quartet having disbanded on the incarceration of trumpeter Red Rodney.

Back, then, to the less memorable. A week after the legendary Massey Hall concert we have this weird "with voices" date<sup>21</sup>. Against inconsequential arrangements by Gil Evans for woodwinds and the Dave Lambert singers, Bird just blows the hell out of three unremarkable standards seemingly ignoring the muddled and ill-conceived accompaniment and saving the date from otherwise deserved oblivion.

At some time, a big-band setting was inevitable so Joe Lipman arranged and directed for two dates; January 1952<sup>17</sup> with normal saxes, brass, rhythm plus strings etc while, in the March<sup>18</sup>, a big band without strings. Bird takes care of business on both and the bands – if, nevertheless, bland and somewhat anonymous-swing (even the string-laden one) – but still there is that inescapable impression of Bird detached from rather than written into the proceedings.

In the final analysis, the strictly "with strings" has remained the most controversial of the Granz pairings. Impressed with Gillespie's plan to record again with strings, Parker, for all his street-wisdom, naively felt the necessity to "make bebop respectable" so was very willing to co-operate when the idea was mooted. At the first session in November 1949<sup>19</sup>, six tracks were completed, "Just Friends"<sup>26</sup> being the outstanding title, but on all, the alto playing is fresh and enthusiastic. The string arrangements by Jimmy Carroll were merely adequate backing and it was more of the same in July 1950<sup>19</sup> with scores by Joe Lipman. Here eight tracks resulted with pleasing if unspectacular Bird. It was the "live" strings at Carnegie Hall in the September<sup>10</sup> with Jimmy Mundy's charts and a highly responsive audience which inspired Bird to greater heights in a beautiful "Easy to Love". Other successes are "Repetition" and "Rockin'" becoming "I'll Remember April".

Undoubtedly, the strings project was the one to widen Parker's appeal outside the cognoscenti. However, going overboard and taking the strings group on the road with its built-in limitations was a disastrous move and probably accelerated the inevitable final breakdown. ■

Parker with Oscar Peterson and Barney Kessel.



(N.Y.C. C.R.M.)

**PARKER - VERVE SESSIONS****● Volume 1 - Charlie Parker with Strings**

(817442-1).

"Repetition"<sup>1</sup> - 12/47 (Bird's sole late 1948); "No Noise"<sup>112</sup>, "Mango Mangue"<sup>1</sup> - 20/12/<sup>48</sup>; "Okiedoke"<sup>4</sup> - 1/49; "The Bird"<sup>5</sup> - 10/2/49; "Cardboard", "Visa" - 4/49; "Segment", "Passport (Blues)", "Passport (Rhythm)", "Diverse" (alt., "Segment") - 5/5/49; "Just Friends", "Everything Happens To Me", "April In Paris", "Summertime", "I Didn't Know What Time It Was", "If I Should Lose You" - 30/11/49.

**● Volume 2 - Bird and Diz** (817443-1).

"Star Eyes", "Blues (Fast)", "I'm In The Mood For Love" - 3/49/45/50<sup>1</sup>; "Bloomingdo", "An Oscar For Treadwell"<sup>1</sup> (tk.3), "An Oscar For Treadwell"<sup>1</sup> (tk.4), "Mohawk"<sup>1</sup> (tk.3), "Mohawk"<sup>1</sup> (tk.6), "My Melancholy Baby", "Leap Frog" (tk.4), "Leap Frog" (tk.6) - 6/6/50<sup>1</sup>.

**● Volume 3 - Charlie Parker with Strings**

(817444-1).

"Relaxin' With Lee"<sup>1</sup> (tk.2), "Relaxin' With Lee"<sup>1</sup> (tk.3) - 6/6/50<sup>1</sup>; "Dancing In The Dark", "You Came Along From Out Of Nowhere", "Laurn", "East of the Sun", "They Can't Take That Away From Me", "Easy to Love", "I'm In The Mood For Love", "I'll Remember April" - 5/7/50<sup>1</sup>.

**● Volume 4 - Machito - Afro-Cuban Jazz/****Machito Jazz with Flip & Bird** (817445-1).

"Repetition", "What Is This Thing Called Love?", "April In Paris", "Easy to Love", "Rocker" (intro) "I'll Remember April" - Carnegie Hall, 16/9/50<sup>11</sup>; "Celebrity"<sup>11</sup>, "Ballade"<sup>12</sup> - 10/50<sup>1</sup>; "Cancion", "Mambo-I", "Mambo-II", "6/8", "Jazz", "Rhumba Abierta" - 21/12/50<sup>11</sup>.

**● Volume 5 - The Magnificent Charlie Parker**

(817446-1).

"Au Privave" (tk.2), "Au Privave" (tk.3), "She Rote"<sup>1</sup> (tk.3), "She Rote"<sup>1</sup> (tk.5), "K.C. Blues", "Star Eyes", "Un Poquito De Tu Amor", "Tico Tico", "Fiesta", "Why Do I Love You" (tk.2), "Why Do I Love You" (tk.6), "Why Do I Love You" (tk.7) - 12/3/51<sup>1</sup>.

**● Volume 6 - Charlie Parker - South of the Border** (817447-1).

"Blues For Alice", "Si Si", "Swedish Schnapps" (tk.3), "Swedish Schnapple" (tk.4), "Back Home Blues" (tk.1), "Back Home Blues" (tk.2), "Lover Man" - 8/8/51<sup>1</sup>; "Temptation", "Lover", "Autumn in New York", "Stella By Starlight" - 22/1/52<sup>17</sup>; "Mama Inez", "La Cucaracha", "Estrellita", "Begin The Beguine", "La Paloma" - 23/1/52<sup>18</sup>.

**● Volume 7 - Charlie Parker Big Band**

(817448-1).

"Night and Day", "Almost Like Being In Love", "I Can't Get Started", "What Is This Thing Called Love?" - 25/3/52<sup>19</sup>; "The Song Is You", "Laird Baird", "Kim"<sup>1</sup> (tk.2), "Kim"<sup>1</sup> (tk.4), "Cosmic Rays" (tk.2), "Cosmic Rays" (tk.5) - 30/12/52<sup>20</sup>; "In The Still Of The Night", "Old Folks", "I Love Again" - 22/5/53<sup>21</sup>; "Chi Chi"<sup>1</sup> (tk.1), "Chi Chi"<sup>1</sup> (tk.3), "Chi Chi"<sup>1</sup> (tk.6) - 28/7/48/8/53<sup>22</sup>.

**● Volume 8 - Charlie Parker** (817449-1).

"I Remember You", "Now's The Time", "Confirmation" - 28/7/48/8/53<sup>23</sup>; "I Get A Kick Out Of You" (tk.1), "I Get A Kick Out Of You" (tk.7), "Just One Of Those Things", "My Heart Belongs To Daddy", "I've Got You Under My Skin" - 31/3/54<sup>24</sup>; "Love For Sale" (tk.4), "Love For Sale" (tk.5), "I Love Paris" (tk.2), "I Love Paris" (tk.3) - 10/12/54<sup>24</sup>.

"I heard that tone and I knew it was him..." - Jackie McLean

# Under The Influence

**Keith Shadwick looks at the startling effect BIRD'S music had immediately on his contemporaries but asks who was to carry the legacy forward?**

CHARLIE PARKER was indisputably the single most dominant influence in jazz in the decade between 1945 and 1955. His innovations were felt by virtually every young instrumentalist, from drummers through to trumpeters and guitarists: even singers reflected his rhythmic and harmonic sensibility.

In addition to that, it's worth remembering that, although not seen generally as a major jazz composer, Parker's unusually elaborate and melodically intriguing themes also set the style for the following decade. Mingus' well-publicised comments about if there was a law banning the stealing of ideas then Bird could've jailed a generation were hardly an exaggeration of the situation while he was alive.

Yet, within five years of Parker's death, the degree to which that influence had evaporated is quite extraordinary. Newcomers to the music, even new alto sax-players, no longer saw him as the logical model for a complete style, as they had while he was around. In addition to that, players who had grown up under Bird's influence, in his shadow even, were gradually evolving a more personal approach, tone and style. The music was opening up and diversifying, even before the shattering advent of Ornette Coleman: players such as Miles Davis, Mingus, Monk, Rollins, Coltrane, Adderley and even Clifford Brown, who himself only survived Parker by a year, were becoming the new vanguard - the new theorists in the music who carried the greatest influence as they built on the innovations of Parker to extend into wholly or partly original and fresh territory.

The career of someone such as Jackie McLean is a case in point, illustrating this relatively swift demise of the Parker dominance. A self-confessed Bird imitator, a personal friend and acolyte, and someone with a deep and genuine love for Parker's genius, McLean in 1955 was wholly swallowed up in the imitation of his mentor. After Parker's death, McLean stuck pretty closely to his master's voice through his initial forays into making records under his own name and, as the Fifties progressed, he made some not particularly distinguished blowing ses-

sions and a handful of more interesting things for Prestige, showing a slowly developing persona, a hardening of attack and an arrival at a more immediately recognisable sound. Yet, taken at face value, his approach suggested little or no real investigation outside the usual bop progressions on old standards patented by Bird.

Yet, by the close of the decade - after a brief but stimulating stint with Mingus and a change of record label - McLean rapidly established a series of post-Parker beachheads, within both improvising and composition. Pieces such as "Quadrangle" on a 1959 date and "A Fickle Sonance" on a 1962 session, were both originally conceived of in 1955 but left alone until a record company which would record them was found, and until McLean himself understood what he was getting at in writing such strange, linear, dissonant pieces with very little foundation in conventional harmonic structures. As he himself wrote in his liner notes to *Let Freedom Ring*: "Getting away from the conventional and much overused chord changes was my personal dilemma. Until recently this was the reason why many things I composed in 1955 left me helpless when it came to a basis for improvisation; for example, the two songs 'Quadrangle' and 'A Fickle Sonance'. I used 'I Got Rhythm' for the solo section in 'Quadrangle'. These changes do not fit the personality of the tune at all."

What had been going on to bring McLean to this stage? For a start, a series of disparate, mostly unconnected experiments had been taking place in jazz since before Bird's death, hinting at developments soon to change the music ineradicably. Monk had, for the first time, slowly been emerging from ten years in the wilderness to become a major public figure, exerting a broad influence in the second half of the Fifties as a pianist and composer. Mingus, after many diverse experiments in his "workshops" in the early Fifties, went on after Parker's death to make a series of definitive albums documenting his twin concerns with ethnic forms of music and with increasingly complex compositional structures. Within both of these formats he was also continually exploring such old jazz ideas as collective improvisation, the "vocalising" of instruments and rapidly

accelerating and decelerating tempi. Many of his ideas would reach personal fulfilment in the following decade, while some of the above would become a basic touchstone for the Sixties avant-garde.

Heading off in another, and eventually even more influential, direction by 1958 was Miles Davis, just three years after Parker's death, and three years after he himself had recorded Parker's "Ah-Leu-Cha" with his new quintet. Miles' approach to his instrument – his sound alone – took younger musicians' ears away from Diz & Bird, as had Clifford Brown a couple of years earlier. And Miles, with his increasing collaboration with Gil Evans, and his deepening commitment to simpler harmonic structures that were more open for the sort of poised melodic constructions which were such a personal strength, was completely changing the face of the music.

For many people, these processes coalesced magically on two dates: the big-band *Sketches of Spain* and the sextet *Kind of Blue*. When you listen to these two records, there's not so much as a trace of Parker imitation. Even Cannonball Adderley, playing alto sax on *Kind of Blue*, has a musical personality which is completely his own. By saying this I am not denying Parker's broader influence through his musical thinking on these musicians: just noting the evaporation of any attempt at mimicry, which was something it was virtually impossible to escape from just four years earlier.

Another sax player on that same date, John Coltrane, was also abandoning a search as intense as Miles' through the standard-song repertoire and its run of conventional chord changes. After a seemingly endless quest into the use of ever-more-complex chord substitutions, Coltrane took Miles' lead and moved into the realms of scales and modes, relying ever more heavily on song structures of his own making, such as "Naima" or "Impressions".

One other thing that Coltrane had developed still has direct echoes in virtually every young saxophonist of today: his sound. It was to be the single most influential sound since Parker's. After Coltrane's own death, in 1967, there was not to be a repeat of this and, even today, no single sound has come to dominate the scene as Parker and Coltrane did in their time. But, looking at these musicians as a loosely affiliated group, it is true to say that for none of them could Bird be realistically perceived as the primary inspiration by the late Fifties, however deeply they privately respected his legacy. It's equally true to say that there were many creative musicians working much more closely to the older formats, such as Gigi Gryce, Lee Morgan, Ernie Henry and so forth, just as the mavericks such as Tristano and Konitz continued to follow their own paths; but this was to become increasingly something of a musical backwater, especially after the events of 1960.

It's generally held that jazz was in a state of arrested development, and falling into tired hard-bop clichés, when Ornette Coleman took up residency at the Five Spot in New York City in 1960. As with most sweeping statements, there was sufficient truth in it for the idea to gain momentum as the years passed. But it's an inaccurate and misleading idea. Jazz was ready for someone like Ornette, at least from a strictly musical point of view, just as it had been ready for Parker in 1944 or so. For Ornette's was merely the most radical of many reactions away from the increasing sophistication of modern jazz at that time.

Many musicians had been moving on from bop formulas, not least Cecil Taylor and Eric Dolphy, in very different ways and circumstances. Dolphy's early work with Chico Hamilton shows a clear stylistic debt to Bird but also serves to underline Dolphy's emergent individuality, from his attack down to the very structure of his phrases. Dolphy was taking Parker and applying him to more abstract, more fragmentary musical situations, while paradoxically attempting to get as close as possible to the "human voice" element in jazz.

Taylor's distance from bop and all it then entailed was obvious even in 1957 and, by the time he made an LP of Cole Porter standards with a trio in 1958, his concepts are so clearly defined and so antithetical to the interpreting of such material that the Porter standards come out virtually re-composed. Closer to the mainstream, such pianists as Herbie Nichols and Bill Evans were moving into completely new areas of music compared with those Bird and, say, Bud Powell had inhabited. And, of course, Evans went on to become the most influential pianist of his generation.

So with the advent of Ornette Coleman, the music, which was already being stretched violently in many new directions, was confronted with a novel new solution. It's often been remarked that Ornette in 1960 was a modern primitive but mostly this has been taken out of context. Ornette had precisely the shock value he did because the jazz vanguard was so sophisticated, so hip. It was a more radical and refined version of bop just as bop had been of swing and blues. Ornette himself came straight from the blues, possessing that big Texas cry on his instrument, though it took a lot of people some time to see it. The impulse for which Ornette was the catalyst in jazz at that stage was sheer naked emotion, a harder type of beauty than had hitherto been the norm. Few might have copied Ornette's style as such but he opened the floodgates which spawned Shepp, Ayler, Sanders, Coltrane's later work... the list is as long as the history of jazz in the Sixties.

Does this mean that Parker's innovations had led merely to a dead-end? That his acolytes and the people immediately after him finally had to reject his musical



Miles Davis.



John Coltrane.

Jackie McLean.



values and influence in order to progress any further? Perhaps this is partly true. Bird himself, in his brief career, didn't evolve his style all that much after 1944 at the latest, however brilliant his playing in that style might have been on any given occasion. Were the problems he'd posed to the jazz world finally insuperable even for him?

Certainly, when you compare his career to Ellington's, Miles' or Coltrane's, the first clear difference is that Bird arrived on the scene virtually fully formed, while each of the other three had long and sometimes painful evolutions. Yet all three still have an enormous direct influence on current jazz: if you take the case of Coltrane - who was influential in the music during his lifetime for a comparable period to Parker and whose death was as big a trauma - the divergence of parallel posthumous events is perhaps illuminating.

Within three years of Coltrane's death, the avant-garde he'd done so much to nurture in his later years had largely lost a great deal of its energy and directness and jazz was on the edge of going electric. Yet today, eighteen years later, Coltrane's sound is still the dominant one on his instrument, for all that's arrived in the intervening years, and a great number of his musical concerns have remained the concerns of the generations after him - the investigation of modes and scales, the re-evaluation of the jazz tradition (check out Trane's "Body and Soul" to see that, or "Blues to Bechet"), the investigation of rhythm as a dominant force in the music and the incessant striving for dignity in one's art and life.

All these things were central to jazz in the Seventies and remain important today. It's valid to ask if Trane's immediate influence during his lifetime and after his death was always a positive thing but that hardly denies his value as a player and innovator in his own right. He can't be held to blame for some of the more precious and pompous musical and verbal declamations which his own intense and serious musical intelligence probably helped inspire.

That being the case, was Coltrane's position as a musical and spiritual teacher a key element in the longevity of his influence? People who knew Bird often talked about his being a formative influence in their lives, a sort of teacher, however sordid and frustrating his own life was. And often, they muse about what he would have achieved as a person and musician if he'd not been into dope and booze so badly. Such speculation is ultimately sad and pointless but it does demonstrate a keen desire on the part of these people for Bird to fulfil the duties of a musical father-figure, with all its attendant responsibilities. However, Bird was quite incapable of being such a figure. Coltrane, on the other hand, undoubtedly exactly that to many people after his first material successes, quite consciously

let himself be used in that way by younger players whose music he admired. He was able to give more back to the musicians around him than Parker had been.

This idea of a role adopted within the musical community is part of the answer but not all: we have to keep searching to find more and asking more questions. Were Coltrane's explorations more open-ended, or even less perfected, than Parker's? Did he leave more room for the people after him? Bird certainly left very little unsaid in the music he virtually carved in his own image and it's noticeable that, in spite of a marked trend towards a reinvestigation of Parker's legacy in this decade or more, this retrospective has yet to yield any significant stylistic advance within the confines of bop which wasn't clearly staked out by Parker and his contemporaries in their own era. Only when players from another period and with different stylistic roots approach bop for the first time is there suddenly a new perspective, as it were; another viewpoint gained through the distorting mirror of recent jazz history.

Looking back, perhaps it's true to say that, in the years immediately after 1955, there was only one course open, ultimately, to a serious young musician: to respect the dead but slowly, perhaps painfully, learn to think for oneself.

McLean did it, and he wasn't alone; players such as Sonny Rollins, Kenny Dorham and Jimmy Lyons not only grew away from the Parker style but finally

became influential in their own right with later generations. Others who stuck much more rigidly to the Parker canon were faced with two alternatives: the prospect of becoming a musical footnote, losing relevance and vitality and finally drifting out of music, or of playing the newly popular "soul" and "funk" styles which were a great popular success as the Fifties came to a close. Talented players such as Lou Donaldson made a whole career out of choosing this route, meanwhile sticking very close to the Parker vocabulary in his improvisations, both in timbre and actual phrasing, and it is perhaps here that Parker's true legacy lies now. For a great deal of superior music was made in these otherwise unadventurous musical surroundings; music that has lasted well and stands up even today as some of the best of its period: indeed, most of the Blue Note, Riverside and Prestige catalogues of this time were made up with such material and jazz history would be greatly the poorer for not having it.

It's just sad, perhaps, that Parker - the greatest innovator of his generation - should bequeath to his immediate followers a legacy of musical consolidation and further stylistic refinement, rather than the similar spirit of adventure, enquiry and risk-taking which made him the giant he clearly was. It was left to others, coming from different musical territory and reaching different musical conclusions, to carry the music forward by other means. ■



"I said: 'Hey, here's Charlie Yardbird-a-roonie . . . McVouty, man, take the next chorus . . .' — Slim Gaillard

"Bird had it all . . ." — George Coleman

"My first reaction? It was better than any sexual experience I've ever had! . . ." — Red Rodney

"Sad, but he never really got to rejoice — to enjoy it all . . ." — Jay McShann

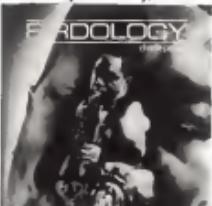
*The displayed quotes within this Charlie Parker section are from the draft of Stan Britt's projected book, Bird Rappin'.*

# ESSENTIAL PARKER

**CHARLIE PARKER**  
BIRD/THE SAVOY RECORDINGS  
(MASTER TAKES)



2. EARLY BIRD — Spotlite SPJ 120  
 ● Studio sessions and airshots from the Kansas City-based Jay McShann band where Parker started his professional career — (1940–42).



5. BIRDODOLOGY — Charlie Parker Records (ZC)CP 507

● Airshots from the Royal Roost, with Kenny Dorham, late Forties: superlative Parker in a live format.



8. JAZZ AT MASSEY HALL — (Fantasy) OJC 044

● Often billed as "the Greatest Jazz Concert Ever", it isn't that but it does offer inspired 1953 Parker.



3. PARKER/NAVARRO/POWELL LIVE — Jazz Anthology (Musidisc) 5136  
 ● Birdland airshots, with all three musicians in brilliant form on extended solos — (1949).



6. BIRD & DIZ — Charlie Parker Records (ZC)CP 512

● 1951 airshots from Birdland: absolutely breathtaking playing from Parker, Gillespie and Bud Powell on bop standards.



9. BIRD ON VERVE VOL 5 — Verve 817.446-1

● Early Fifties studio sessions in a variety of settings: some excellent work here.

1. BIRD/THE SAVOY MASTER TAKES — Savoy 5JL 2201 (2xLP)

● Essential first-base Parker: it includes his miraculous "Ko Ko" solo from his first date as a leader — (1944–48).



4. WEST COAST TIME — Charlie Parker Records (ZC)CP 505

● A handy compilation of some of the most important Dial masters — (1946–47).



7. BIRD AND PRES, JATP — Verve VRV(C) 5

● 1949 JATP recordings, and classics of their kind, as are the currently unavailable 1946 JATP sides.



10. FUNKY BLUES (JAM SESSIONS 1 & 2) — Verve Deleted

● A legendary session with Parker in tandem with Hodges, Carter & Webster. Worthy playing from all participants.

**(on a small budget)**

# Bird Rappin'

Musicians talk about CHARLIE PARKER, Stan Britt listens . . .



Kenny Clarke was playing drums and Charlie Mingus on bass. I said: "Wow! What am I doing in this company?"

I did get to play with Bird on one or two other occasions – including one occasion where he complimented me and really made me feel good. That was the time he was playing up in Harlem . . . One night, on the last set of the night, some guys were sitting in – Miles, Gerry Mulligan, for instance. I, too, got the chance to sit in. After Miles played, Bird played. After the last set Bird complimented me on my comping.

He said: "You really swing. You really get up under us and make us feel like playing." That made me feel very happy . . .

**Eddie "Cleanhead" Vinson:**  
First heard Bird in 1939, with Jay McShann. They were at a little jam-session after the gig at Shreveport, Louisiana. So I kidnapped him to Houston! For about three days. I took

him home and we'd go out into a barn, we'd play and we just had fun . . .

I'd just got into the army and J.J. Jackson – the other altoist with the band – asked me: "Man, have you heard Bird?" I said, no, never. But later, of course, we got to be real tight. But I'd never heard him play . . . we were playin' "Cherokee", and we were goin' through almost the same kind of thing. So, people thought I'd heard Bird – but I'd never heard Bird. What did I think of him first time? *Shit!* I took him home with me!

Lotta Bird in me? Sure. He liked the way I played the blues. That's how we got tight. I don't know why but he used to say: "I wish I had your soul!" That was such a lovely thing to say. I'd say: "Man, what do you mean?" Because he was the blues? Right!

**Mary Lou Williams:**  
Charlie Parker, when I (first) met him, he was in knee pants. I don't know how old he was. I don't even remember the year.

TALKING about the genius of Charlie Parker to jazz musicians over twenty to twenty-five years or so has been a regular privilege and pleasure for me.

Some of the musicians, whose personal comments are published here-with, themselves have been innovators on their respective instruments. Some actually worked alongside Parker. Some never even met him. And, in one or two cases, never even had the opportunity to appreciate totally Parker's immortal talents at close hand, in person performance.

But each of the musicians who talked so readily about Charlie Parker agreed on one thing: we'll never have anyone in our lifetime to surpass his extraordinary contributions to the art of improvised jazz . . .

#### Red Holloway:

I always loved what Charlie Parker played. And I copied Charlie Parker like a lotta other musicians. First heard him play "Salt Peanuts". First reactions? I wanted to quit! I couldn't believe anybody could play that fast. I said: "Must have rehearsed for at least a year before he could play like that!"

#### Sonny Stitt:

I was with Tiny Bradshaw when I met Bird. I'd heard a couple of records with him . . . "Swingmatism" was one. And when I first heard him? I said that's what I wanna be – like that! Because I'd never heard anything like it . . . it was sorta like an alto played by Lester Young.

First heard Bird live in 1943. This is my first time in Kansas City. I was 19, wild and crazy . . . I stood on the corner. This cat walks out with his dark glasses on. He had a blue overcoat with six white buttons – I'll never forget it – and an alto on one hand . . . I said: "Are you Charlie Parker?" He grinned and showed me his great big gold tooth. He said: "Yeah, I'm Charlie Parker. Who are you?" I said: "I'm Sonny Stitt." He said: "You with Tiny Bradshaw?" I said: "Yeah." And we walked down the street – friends . . .

. . . So, we took out our saxophones. Just the two of us – we didn't have no piano-player. And we just started playin' the blues . . . it was amazing, because we did sound similar then. He said: "You sound like me, man . . ."

#### Horace Silver:

I played with Bird three or four times. I only worked with him one night. His pianist, Walter Bishop, was sick and I took his place. I played a dance with Bird. I was quite thrilled – and a little nervous, too. That particular time I was scared to death. In fact, I made some blunders, musically, because I was so frightened . . . I knew the songs. I could play the chords and everything. I was just nervous. Not only was Bird on the gig,

He was playing with Andy Kirk's wife, on a gig. That was so funny. She played a kind of oom-cha style. Someone said: "Listen, he sounds good" . . . but the rhythm and stuff wasn't right for it. Now, the musicians cannot do that. You have to play in *their* vein . . . he was terrific – and that really shocked somebody like Hawkins. Then, of course, look what happened later . . .

#### Ruby Braff:

I used to play with Charlie Parker at lots of jam sessions in Boston, my hometown. He used to come to Boston with his group. And there were places after-hours that we'd go to and fool around and jam. He was wonderful. Good guys play that great; and with no problems – everybody has their own stop-off, all you got to do is agree on a tune. It was totally memorable. Unforgettable. And that sums up Bird, doesn't it . . .?

#### Jimmy Witherspoon:

I was in Nashville during his last major tour – he did it with Stan Kenton. He came in town and woke me up. I was in a hotel with some chick who was majoring in music and a knock came to the door. I said: "Who is it?" I was half out of it. And he said: "This is Bird." That chick just flipped over him. She said: "It can't be *Charlie Parker*." But that's who it was . . . He wanted me to go and get some pads put on his horn so I did. I asked Bird to play "Hootie Blues", for me, as he did in 1943 when Walter Brown sang. So, he hummed a bit, said OK. Lee Konitz was warming up and he asked Lee to get out with all that noise. And he played for me – and that was one of the biggest delights. But he told me then that it was a shame that he had to come out and do a concert with Kenton and could not afford his own group. Which was a sad thing . . .

#### Johnny Griffin:

When I first heard him? It killed me, it was beautiful. Frightened you to death. Sound – everything. It was frightening. I could hear Dexter and Gene and Hawk – they all turned me on. But when you heard Bird, you didn't – don't – compare . . . there's nobody to compare with Bird, except maybe Tatum, or somebody like that.

Nobody ever excited me like Bird. No-one. There are very few things that he's recorded that give you the *real* truth. But to hear him play in person – he was so commanding . . . everybody else was like children around. The musicians couldn't stand it, either, and he'd treat them like that.

He turned me completely around. It was frightening. I just couldn't imagine how somebody could have that kind of facility to express himself like that, to project in that way.

#### Art Pepper:

When I came out of the army at the end of

1946 the same guy who had first turned me on to Pres by playing me his records came to see me and said: "I've gotta play something for you." You see, I hadn't heard of Charlie Parker because I was overseas and he wasn't too well known before I left. Anyway, this guy, Bob, played me the record "Salt Peanuts". And I couldn't believe it. At first, I thought that they'd a certain thing that enabled them to speed up the record. My friend said: "No, no – listen to it."

So, I listened to it more closely . . . and I felt ill. I rued the day I ever started to play saxophone. It was just awful. I said: "What am I gonna do?" Then, Bob played another record – more of a medium-tempo thing, and featuring Sonny Stitt. And I thought: "God, there's *more* than one of him!" But, of course, I just *loved* the way Bird played . . . and, of course, the reason I tried not to listen to him too much was that I wanted to have my own voice. But, naturally, it was impossible *not* to hear him and be influenced, at least in part. He made jazz into a really serious art form. But just the way he played, it was the alto saxophone at its finest hour . . .

#### Arnett Cobb:

He was a genius. You could tell from the chord structures and the way he handled the horn, he knew what he was doing. It's not a guess thing. There are some musicians – I mean, they know the chord changes, and you can tell it in their playing that they know what they're doing. And he knew it then, he came up as a *musician* . . .

Yes, he come up with the blues. That's what he was playin' with Jay McShann, so he was orientated with the blues.

#### George Coleman:

He was the kind of musician that was *complete*. He had so much of everything – with technique and taste and time. He was *Bird*? You see, Bird played some things, most musicians don't realise . . . a lot of these so-called avant-gardists today, they don't realise some of the complex things Bird played. It was reminiscent of the avant-garde but years ahead. Although it was melodic and harmonic, he played some things that were absolutely astounding – outside of the harmonics. He did that quite often – but they won't take the time to listen.

Bird had it all. I must have heard Bird, first, when I was about fourteen-fifteen. And I understood it completely. I knew hardly anything about music, except for a little basic music education in high school or school – and I wasn't even in high school yet – but I was very much impressed by the way he played the saxophone. I could hear all the harmonics. I knew he was playing correctly. And from that day, I was inspired. I said: "Oh, I'd sure like to do that!"



#### Harry Edison:

Yes, when I first heard Bird it did seem pretty obvious that he'd gotten together something special – but you never know, you can never predict. He was doing something that nobody could understand, really. It's just like you seeing a car the first time – it's amazing. You've been in a horse-and-buggy all your life, and all of a sudden you see a car. You've been riding a train all your life, and all of a sudden you're on an airplane. Amazing. You have to get accustomed to it; so what he was playing, you had to get accustomed to.

But it sounded good to me. He created something . . . although a lotta would-be good saxophone players today he made bad saxophone players because they tried to imitate him . . .

#### Slim Gaillard:

Oh, well, I mean, he was a *genius*! He set the pace, I liked his tone, his way of playin'. Blues great? Yeah! Great sound. Lotsa people followed his style – even do, still, today. We worked together in New York, at Birdland, for years. We used to have groups we used to alternate around. But I first met him at Billy Berg's, Vine Street.

Yeah, it all fitted right together – with Bird, Dizzy, and the other cats – on "Poppy Pop", "Dizzy Boogie", "Flat Foot Hoogie", "Slim's Jam". It didn't

### Lee Konitz:

If people ask me why I didn't play like Charlie Parker, I might say, by now – honest man that I am – that I really didn't get in and duplicate that music as one does, when one goes through the motions of someone else's expression.

At first, it was an ego thing because when people said I was different from Bird, I said: "Maybe I'd better not do what everybody else is doing – because I was involved with Tristano. And that was a definite point of view. And that came out of Bird . . .

First time I heard Bird? That was a Guild record, with a red label and white printing of the words "Hot House" . . . it was so powerful. I was listening to Johnny Hodges and Benny Carter mainly on the alto saxophone at that time. This was – what? – 1945 or so. I mean, I wasn't twenty years old yet. It was very strong – too strong for me, at first. It sounded like music I wasn't really interested in yet.

I quickly got interested but it took me a while to get past some of the – I thought of them as brutal – elements . . . but his basic elements, nevertheless, included great melody. One of the great melody players? Of course!

### B.B. King:

I first heard him with McShann . . . at that time they had a record out called "Confessin' the Blues", vocal by Walter Brown. I remember it because Charlie didn't solo on that one! However, I do recall him solo on records like "Hootie Blues" and "Sepian Bounce" . . . He was like a refreshing breeze. Blues – which, of course, I liked – I'd heard on guitar and harmonica. But to hear him play so bluesily, and with phrasing that was modern for the time . . . no other saxophonist had sounded like that to me

### Dexter Gordon:

What did I think of him (first time)? Marvellous! He was playing what I wanted to hear. Fortunately, I worked with Hamp's band opposite McShann at the Savoy Ballroom for a whole week. So, I got the chance to hear them every night and thus get to meet Bird. In McShann's band his talent was still developing – you could hear it. It was fresh and new. But it hadn't reached the maturity and the stage of development it had three years later.

And his tone . . . if you listened to him on the McShann things – his tone was very nice but it was on the weak side. But, just a few years later, it had become so . . . full! He always used a rubber mouthpiece but with a very stiff reed. I tried blowing it. I couldn't get nothin' out of it . . .

### Joe Zawinul:

Ben Webster, who was one of my best friends, told me that one night when the

Ellington band – of which he was then a member – had been playing in Sugar Hill, Harlem, during the mid Forties. After which several of the guys went to Minton's Playhouse to hear this youngster from Kansas City. An alto-player, Johnny Hodges was there . . . Ben . . . Cootie Williams . . . Ray Nance . . . they were all rather drunk but they heard Bird play. And they couldn't believe it.

So, the next night the whole band went back to Minton's. After this, Ben told me, nobody in the Ellington band recovered from the experience for three years! For myself, the first time I heard Bird was on that record from the Massey Hall concert. And I tell you, man, I was scared to death. It totally devastated me . . .

### Ernie Wilkins:

I couldn't believe what I heard. I first heard him on one of Jay McShann's records. It was around 1942. I had never heard an alto sax sound like that in my life. I can't describe it. I first heard him live with Billy Eckstine's band. It was during the war – 1944 – and I was in the navy . . . That night, I'll never forget it. Hearing Bird for the first time was mind-blowing . . . when it was all over, we followed Bird to a jam session. And that did it . . . !

### Tony Scott:

Bird played with such *feelin'*. He played the blues – no matter how fast, he played the blues. In his playing – no matter how fast it was – there was always that cry of Kansas City.

Bird sat in with me one time – it's out on SCAM Records. And that night, the floor at Café Society – parquet flooring – vibrated when he played. Vibrated. Only a tenor could do that. But Bird could do it. Just think of a good tenor-player, anybody you like with a big sound – like a Ben Webster – and Bird had a tone like that. Because he was a tenor-player, you see, and he changed to alto.

He was playing tenor in New York one night. Ben Webster took the tenor out of his hands and said: "Hey, man, the horn ain't supposed to sound that fast! What's your name, boy?" And Bird said: "My name is Charlie Parker, Mr Webster." Ben was shocked . . .

First time I heard Bird was about 1943 – at Clark Monroe's Spotlite Club, on 52nd Street; it was originally the Famous Door which became the Spotlite . . . Somebody said: "Hey, man, that cat Charlie Parker's over at the Spotlite, sittin' in with Don Byas" . . . I was diggin' Byas' playin'. Then there was a break. Usually, in the old days, when you heard a break, it sounded like a gun had gone off in a chicken coop. Then, Bird went on . . . I looked – and I was paralysed. I had two pieces of clarinet in my hands . . . I was lookin' at him and I was tryin' to put the clarinet together but I couldn't stop lookin' at this cat. "What the hell was that?" – I didn't never hear no break like that. Incredible. Like chickens flying all over the place, man . . .

seem that it would work but it did. I had Bird to talk on the first one – he never talks on any record except my record. Never would talk. I said: "Hey, here's Charlie Yardbird-a-roonie . . . McVouty, man, take the next chorus . . ." And he said: "Hey man, Jim" – he called ev'rybody Jim – "I don't have a need! McVouty's got a reed!" So, I cracked: "Well, I'll go and see McVouty" . . .

### Hampton Hawes:

I played with Charlie Parker when I was eighteen, fresh out of high school. I still haven't recovered. Now, 25 years later, I still feel the same about Parker as when I first played with him, then. That was my whole schooling, my college – anything you want to call it.

Just listening to Charlie Parker. Maybe if I hadn't listened to and played with him, I might have quit and taken up another occupation. I used to pick him up and take him to work every night. He didn't say nothing about playing for about a week. Then, one night, he got out of the car to go into the house. It was about three o'clock in the morning and I was getting ready to drive home. He just turned to me and said: "I heard you." That's all he said.

From that, I interpreted that what I was doing was OK and he was being complimentary. So, I just kept on going in the same way . . .



Finally, I put my clarinet together. Walked up and sat next to him. And just looked at this cat. Then, I stood next to him. Heard his tone. Heard this cat flyin'. Couldn't believe what I was hearin'. I musta blacked out because I can't even remember. I was literally lookin' at him but I was paralysed.

#### Peter King:

Bird switched me from clarinet to alto, very definitely. It was the sheer brilliance of it all. The originality. And later on, the more I heard – the emotion behind it. I first discovered him... it couldn't have been more than two–three months after he died.

The first record I bought of Charlie Parker's was in a secondhand shop – same place I got my first clarinet from. It happened to be "Ornithology" with "A Night In Tunisia" on the other side. Immediate reaction was complete amazement – but not incomprehension. That's the strange thing about it. Not even bewilderment.

I just remember being incredibly impressed about how fast he was playing the things. And the complexity of everything. But I never felt it was not musical, or that it was incomprehensible. It all sounded totally comprehensible – but it was too fast, then, to catch. I never had the impression that it was alien, something I didn't understand at all.

That was it. I just threw myself into it after that...

#### Red Rodney:

My first reaction? It was better than any sexual experience I've ever had! No. Two – I realised right then: this is the direction I wanted to go with my life. I wanted to play this kind of music and I wanted to try and play it as best as I possibly could

For one so inexperienced as I, harmonically – and with no real jazz traditions and roots – he defined everything for me. Perfectly. I heard it all – it all came together... Charlie Parker laid it all out. That was it.

I came back every weekend for the rest of that year. And when that band – with Diz, Bags as well – went to California to play Billy Berg's for eight weeks, I'd just had an offer from Gene Krupa. They were going to California for eight–ten weeks. So, I left Philadelphia and went with Krupa – just as so I could dig Bird nightly at Berg's...

Playing with him was like going to graduate school. That's what it was like for a young trumpet-player with my limited talent. I almost didn't accept the job. Miles had left and Kenny Dorham was there – he came after me, too... but for some reason he couldn't make it and Bird called me. I was scared... I said: "I'd love to – but are you sure?" He said: "Yeah, man, but are you sure?"

Bird... made me feel recognised. In every way. And we were truly friends. So, he was helpful. He knew my limitations. He certainly knew what he'd

had before me – and I certainly know that they were better than me.

But he was able to work with that. He got me to the point – like on the Verve recordings I did with him – where I reached a tremendous improvement plateau. Of course, it was a big jump – that particular period – playing with him.

#### Jackie McLean:

I was fifteen when I first heard Bird. It was in a record shop, owned by my step-father. I was unpacking some new records one day and there was a record with Trummy Young. On the Continental label. With Dizzy, Bird, Don Byas. "Oh," my step-father said, "put that one on." So, I did. He was a big jazz fan but he didn't like the modernists. This is what I was gonna find out. I put on the record – and I heard Charlie Parker. I said: "There's an alto" – because he always used to point out Johnny Hodges and Benny Carter and Willie Smith, and say: "This is what the horn's all about!" I used to say: "Yes, that's why I don't like it. I want to play like this one" – I liked Lester.

Then, I heard Bird, and I said: "That's an alto." But he said: "No, it isn't – that's a tenor"...

I went to see Dizzy's big band at the McKinley Theatre, with Bird on lead alto. That was the first time I saw Bird. He was asleep in the reed section – and I didn't even think that was Bird! But, then, Dizzy called Bird up-front and this guy wakes up, walked out there with those dark glasses on. I heard that tone and I knew it was him, and why he played so great that day...

#### Thad Jones:

First time I really heard him, I was overseas on Guam. I was working with the GI show. The fellow who led the band over there was Bill Hood. We were both up on the top bunks – these are double-bunk beds – and we were listening to the radio. All of a sudden, we hear... "Shaw 'Nuff" I think it was, with Charlie, Dizzy and Sid Catlett... And we fell out of bed and rolled on to the floor, cracking up.

I was happy that it was this particular thing that influenced me because they were so far out – so right. It was rhythmic, harmonic; it had a little bit of everything that we needed, and what we actually wanted to do.

I had heard some things by Charlie Parker before I was inducted into the army. I heard "Hootie Blues" – that great record with Walter Brown, Jay McShann. That (Parker) solo was so impressive, we used to talk about it. And we all agreed that one day this would be the greatest saxophone player.

And Bird was full of love. He was a religious person, and also a very technical person with regards to his music; and he was a lover of the classics. He was a very involved person. He was able to dissolve all of the outside flak. He could condense all of his thinking into

several statements – which is probably the most complicated thing of all.

The first time I saw Charlie Parker was in Kansas City – this was back in 1943. A place called Street's... It was an after-hours joint. We must have got there around 3.30–4.00. Bird was playing "Cherokee" and the place was so dark you couldn't see. You had to feel your way through. Bird was standing up there, with these dark glasses on and playing like you never heard anybody play before in your life. He didn't make any short statements – but they were simple. He played "Cherokee" so long, until the drummer was the only one who could stay with him. And he (Parker) was playing so harmonic and so melodic – and so right – that I didn't even miss the rest of the guys. You didn't need a pianist. He must have played "Cherokee" for fifteen minutes...

#### Sonny Rollins:

The first time I really heard Bird, I think, was on "Koko". My reaction at the time was... it wasn't that I didn't appreciate it, I didn't quite understand what was going on. I mean, I knew I liked it. It was a sort of a different sound; it was a little different from Carter and those guys... At first, I didn't quite grasp it. But I got it fairly soon after that.

Then, there was this mystique about Bird – he was supposed to have been dead... just like the whole Jesus Christ story... and then he was alive again. It was a whole thing about Bird. So, by the time he came to New York again, I was really ready for him, ready to see him.

When I first heard Bird live, I heard him in the context of a jam session. I remember there were guys like Ben Webster there. Now, this gets back to the difference between the styles of the guys... there was some kind of antagonism going on. Because I remember Bird counted off a song he was playing very fast for that time. "Cherokee"? Something like that. And the other guys got mad and didn't want to do it. I kind of noticed something there. It didn't phase me at all. I didn't get upset. It was a great experience seeing him – but not at first, at that time. The real thrill came later...

#### Jay McShann:

Bird, he turned jazz around. After he left me, he was doing the same thing he'd been doing with me – and more. Definitely, I'm very proud of him. He was helluva lotta years ahead of himself. No question about it. Sad, but he never really got to rejoice – to enjoy it all...

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# The Peter Brötzmann Octet

**Machine Gun** -(FMP 0090)

Recorded: Bremen – May 1968.

Tracks: "Machine Gun"; "Responsible"; "Music For Han Bennink I".

Peter Brötzmann (ts, bs); Evan Parker (ts); Willem Breuker (ts); Fred Van Hove (p); Buschi Neibergall (b); Peter Kowald (b); Sven-Ake Johansson (d); Han Bennink (d).

TO SCUPPER my own arguments (see "On The Wire": The Wire, Feb 1985) before anybody else gets there first: this is one of the great free-jazz records. Not a great recording, of course; no album listed thus far in this series qualified as a great recording . . . "Embraceable You" or "West End Blues" one could fairly term "Appalling Recordings". If the recording quality of *Machine Gun* is cheerlessly documentary, the music is too volatile by far to be locked away in a cabinet labelled "Ancient Statements".

Sixteen years after the event, the music still sounds armed and dangerous. It is both an inspiring and a punishing experience for the listener. Also a useful self-flagellant on hungover mornings, when you need to confront your own lethargy and lack of discipline. Impossible to play *Machine Gun* and remain indifferent to life. It always gets me working.

The best-selling of FMP albums, *Machine Gun* actually pre-dated the birth of that label and I believe that Brötzmann himself sold it, gig to gig, until a benign apparition named Jost Gebers materialised to give it a context.

*Machine Gun* was really the first jazz album you could call European. Although *Globe Unity* had recorded before the Brötzmann Octet, the name of Schlippenbach's Orchestra was at that point an ideal rather than any kind of reality: in other words, it was still a German band. In Britain, the SME had begun to define certain aspects of the London scene – its rather self-conscious introverted music about to enter its mystical/vegetarian stage. Whatever else may have been on Brötzmann's mind at the time, we can assume that "the imaginary birds said to live in paradise" were not terribly high on the list. Nor were the players he assembled likely to turn macrobiotic on you, nor begin chanting Ommmmm . . . all due respect to Coltrane and Ayler.

These players from five countries – Germany, Holland, Belgium, Sweden and England – were, at this point, all committed to demolishing as many barriers as possible. All had the right stuff, jazzwise, as perhaps only intense young men can. Later, four of the participants "weakened" (my opinion) their music with "humour" (their opinion) but *Machine Gun* was as earnest as a terrorist raid. It was that, really, a raid on established musical values. Unthinkable without such

American examples as *Ascension* and *New York Eye and Ear Control* to point the way, *Machine Gun* sounded nothing like them. No spiritual search here, no yearning for a better shake in the next world – the Octet was about power, sheer power in the here and now. Somehow, God didn't seem to hang around the bandstand when Brötzmann picked up a saxophone so the guys had to bully their own miracles out of their horns.

For intensity, I've heard nothing that has quite the impact of the title track's opening moments, the saxophones of Brötzmann, Parker and Breuker levelled at a common target and firing off round after round. It could be claimed that intensity was all that Brötzmann had in this period. If so, he certainly knew how to use it; his forcefulness pulls Parker and Breuker into his orbit and a sense of tension ensues when the other instruments take over as we await the awesome re-entry of the saxophones. A little diversion for two bowed basses – call-and-response stuff, clichéd probably even then – becomes almost unbearably nerve-racking as the horns begin to growl and nudge their way in and we wait for it to take over, that gargantuan bloody noise, that landslide of sound . . .

The problem was that once you had been



## Great Recordings

trepanned by Brötzmann and his howling commandos (and learned to love the experience) you put yourself above musical shock. Rock's supposed "threats" – for example, such as Heavy Metal or Punk – were just so much fairy cake to *Machine Gun* people. Even the participants had trouble surpassing the energy level they had reached on this record. Brötzmann titled subsequent albums *Balls* and *Nipples* in a more petulant attempt to offend, and spent much of the next decade becoming a caricature of himself, all moustache and Dada. Not until he formed his excellent trio with Harry Miller and Louis Moholo at the end of the Seventies did he find a way out of being merely the Loud Man. His work from 1979 onwards is, overall, his best, happily.

*Machine Gun* bears out an old dictum of Sunny Murray's – that free music often gives you an insight into what a musician might become. A player leaps in with his youthful territorial claim and then has to marshal all his resources to defend it. For an outsider, this is often the dull part of the process – the refining and crystallizing of techniques but necessary, of course, too.

In the contractions that follow the more furious outbursts of "Machine Gun", you can hear the players scrambling to impress their own voice upon the proceedings. Since there is not much solo space in between the ensemble assaults, they have to grab their chances where they can. And concision is of the essence – in fact, the solos are almost like adverts: "This is what I do. What do you think?"

Twenty-four-year-old Evan Parker – snapped in a rare, between-beards shot on the LP cover – takes the first solo. It holds up pretty well. You can hear where he's coming from and where he's going. That obsessive Coltrane/Sanders yodelling-in-the-vortex effect modifying itself into Evan's more discursive approach, full of chattering sound clusters and cyclical phrases.

Van Hove begins choosing his notes daringly, defying you to predict the next but, finally, the sheer velocity of the piece compels him to resort to impotent Taylorisms and undefined thrashing. He wouldn't get caught that way today.

Breuker's solo, played at white heat, is still a stunner and prompts the reflection that Willem would probably have been more widely accepted if he had carved a career as a soloist rather than composer.

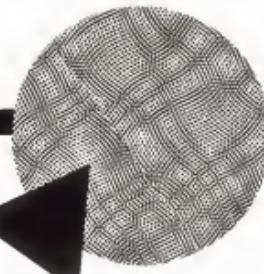
And Brötzmann himself takes it all out. There's nothing left to say but he says it, screams it anyway, rampaging over a corny big-band riff that finally disappears up the fundamental aperture in another blast of ersatz gunnery.

Here's to a *Machine Gun* reunion concert in 1988. And a better recording next time!

Steve Lake

## S O U N D

## C H E C K



## PACO DE LUCIA SEXTET

Live . . . One Summer Night

(Mercury MERL 52)

Recorded: Utrecht, Holland – March or June 1984.

Paco De Lucia (g); Raman De Algeciras (g); Charles Benavent (el b); Pepe De Lucia (voc, rhythm g); Jorge Pardo (flt, ss); Rubem Dantas (perc).

Ever since *Sketches of Spain*, flamenco music has been of abiding interest to many jazz musicians. This may be because it is, to quote Miles Davis, "the Spanish counterpart of our blues". Be that as it may, successful fusions of jazz and flamenco have rarely been produced without the help of indigenous musicians. Furthermore, such musicians are often more enriched by the musical encounter than their employers. Therefore, it is not surprising that Paco De Lucia – who has worked with Larry Coryell, Chick Corea, John McLaughlin and Al Di Meola – produces a form of jazz/flamenco music that is excellent.

Like the blues, flamenco is a particularly passionate and exciting form of music which is not reduced by its successful dilution with elements of jazz. Indeed, to an ear that is attuned to "syncopation", the addition of a percussion-player has made what is a particularly percussive guitar technique even more exhilarating. However, such an approach can, on occasion, become excessively sonorous which has been neatly avoided on the tracks where it is a possibility, namely "Chiquito" and "Gitanos Andaluces" by the inclusion of Jorge Pardo's mellifluous flute.

*Live . . . One Summer Night* demonstrates the best aspects of flamenco but also shows one of the worst – the singing style. Unfortunately, certain tracks – "Palenque" and "Solo Quiero Caminar" – seem to require vocals which are provided by Pepe De Lucia. I say "unfortunately" because Pepe shows about as much talent for singing as a crowd of drunken rugby players after a successful fixture, and the standard flamenco method of displaying emotion by screaming in a wavering voice makes him sound like a heifer having its throat cut. Nevertheless, although his vocals may appear crude, they do improve the music.

However, the best track on the album shows the strongest jazz influence. "Alta Mar" is simply stupendous. It includes some quite incredible guitar work, a superb soprano solo and a bass solo of breath-taking proportions. "Alta Mar" would be my nomination for track of the year, if only for the bass solo. In fact, if it was the only good track on the album (which it isn't) it would still be worth getting. Miss it at your peril.

Calvin Smith

## JOHN McLAUGHLIN

Devotion

(Celluloid CELL 5010)

Recorded: France – 1972.

John McLaughlin (g); Buddy Miles (d, perc); Larry Young (org, el p); Billy Rich (b).

## Mahavishnu

(WEA 251 351 – 1)

Recorded: Paris – April, May 1984.

John McLaughlin (synthesizer g, g); Jonas Hellborg (b); Mitchell Forman (kbds); Bill Evans (ts, ss, flt); Dan Gottlieb (perc); Billy Cobham (d, perc); Katia Labique (kbds); Hari Prasad Chaurasia (perc); Zakir Hussain (tabla).

John McLaughlin is generally acclaimed to be the "greatest living electric guitarist" within the confines of the jazz world. It is, therefore, instructive to compare the recently re-issued album *Devotion* with his latest offering *Mahavishnu* in order to gauge accurately his artistic development over the last twelve years.

*Devotion* is rather anomalous. It's McLaughlin's second album and, in fact, the first solo album on which any of the typical McLaughlin sound is displayed, yet it is described as a rock record.

In an interview with Joachim Berendt, McLaughlin expressed dissatisfaction with the album, claiming that it was mixed and edited without his consent or even his knowledge, so that he didn't even recognise certain sections of it. This is significant, for the album sounds like two or three heavily – and rather clumsily – edited "jam sessions", which, in the light of his comments, appear to have been deliberately manipulated by producers Alan Douglas and Stefan Bright towards what was then a more commercial format.

With the exception of McLaughlin, the performances of the musicians are disappointing: Buddy Miles's drumming tends to be rather staid and monotonous, apart from "Marbles" which is only interesting in this respect because of the space given to the drums in the mix; the bass is relatively prominent but dull and fairly immobile, while Larry Young's organ-playing is decidedly unadventurous.

McLaughlin himself, not surprisingly, performs excellently using plenty of sustain, wah-wah pedal and fuzz-box, as well as the creative use of feedback to produce a sound that was doubtless originally marketed as ersatz Cream/

Hendrix. This is the essence of the album, for it sounds much like the interminable jam sessions propagated by Lifetime, Cream, Mountain and Jimi Hendrix's Band of Gypsys, with McLaughlin filling the role of guitar hero perfectly, if a little modestly.

*Devotion* has three saving graces, which are: John McLaughlin's exemplary guitar work; the absence of the rather lack-lustre vocals that adulterated some of his work and, most importantly, the way that it anticipates the first *Mahavishnu Orchestra* which was probably the best jazz-rock band of the Seventies. For example, "Dragon Song" contains an introductory riff that later resurfaced in the track "One Word", which appears on both *Birds Of Fire* and *Lifetime's Turn It Over*, while "Siren" is an intriguing blues, much like "The Dance of Maya" from *The Inner Mounting Flame*.

Unlike *Devotion*, McLaughlin's latest



## THE GBAYA (CENTRAFRIQUE)

Chants A Penser

(Ocora - SSB 524)

Recorded: Ndongue, l'Empire Centrafricaine  
- 1977.

Etienne Ngobozo, Joseph Samba, Daniel Ngadiké, Robert Taradai, Raymond Doko, Aron Simba, Pascal Minang, Martine Senouane, Martin Kyao (sanzas, voc, perc).

From the very first note of this record, you know that you are in for a good one – would that they were all like this. The person who recommended this album to me said,

"There's a good bit on the second side where you can hear the cicadas singing at night. . . . I intend to counterbalance his understatement.

Three ingredients; sanzas, rattles and

recording, *Mahavishnu*, is absolutely superb. The title – which means divine compassion, beauty and justice – evokes images of eclectic multiple-riff figures and guitar/violin/keyboard contests, all delivered at blistering volume which is not altogether realised, although there are some exhilarating examples of synclavier guitar or synthesizer/tenor and synclavier guitar or synthesizer/tenor/drums dialogues on "East Side West Side" and "Pacific Express".

This album makes nonsense of the idea that Miles Davis is the only master of jazz-rock fusion, for it shows a breadth of vision that is simply staggering. There are examples of funk on "Radio-Activity" and "Nighthriders" that return the word to its original meaning, while the tender composition "Nostalgia" almost brings tears to the eyes, and the meditative piece "When Blue Turns To Gold" is one of the few recordings ever to make constructive use of Indian instruments in a strictly Western setting.

All the musicians involved in the project play superlatively: Billy Cobham shows himself capable of a hitherto unimagined degree of sensitivity (witness "Jazz" for proof of this), while Bill Evans' performances are a joy to perceive. He surely must be the greatest of the new breed of musicians – just a listen to his growing tenor on "Nighthriders" and his fluid soprano on "Nostalgia" will make Miles Davis' under-use of his talents seem positively criminal.

Unfortunately, Jonas Hellborg's playing on this album is merely excellent. He is a master of the thumbed approach to the electric bass, he has even written a book on these techniques, and his totally improvised solos and duets deserve to place him alongside Jaco Pastorius and Stanley Clarke, yet he has not made any particularly individualistic statements here, on either fretted or fretless bass guitar. Indeed, "Pacific Express" features the best Jaco Pastorius copy I've ever heard – the sleeve-note was required to convince me that Pastorius himself hadn't joined the session.

John McLaughlin has recorded five classic albums, albums that define a genre and express virtually all that can be expressed within it. This album is not a classic, and it doesn't look as if it will become a classic, but it comes very close. It is highly recommended. Calvin Smith

voices. The sanza is found almost everywhere in Africa south of the Sahara. A deceptively simple construction of sounding-box, gourd or block with – usually metal – tongues secured over a bridge at one end which curve upwards, plucked by the players' thumbs and fingers. More resonance is gained by the addition of beads or chains at the bridge and, in some instances, unplayed resonant tongues, spider's egg membrane over the soundhole or pebbles in the sounding-box. The sanza is the "walking instrument" of Africa, often played to pass the time while travelling or waiting, to "talk" with the player. It is here where the differences from any European musical function become apparent.

The philosophy and playing is anything but simple. For the sanzas of the Gbaya each



tongue is a member of a family. The longer the parents; the shorter the children. In the Cameroun, the pebbles in the box are the ancestors. Not a "simple" symbolic representation but more a living part of the instrument. The families speak to one another – a dialogue pattern according to age and position. They speak to the player, ancestors express approval . . . or disapproval. Thus it becomes a vital part of the philosophy within the framework of everyday life.

Beyond the philosophy of the instrument, there is that of the music – different songs for different functions. Here it is "thinking song" which aptly describes the effect to the listener of having wandered into somebody's private inner conversation. The sanzas, with their marvellously complex, intricate and evolving patterns should have Philip Glass et al running for cover; the grouped voices, the same. Yet, they always sound personal – group or solo, interjection or chorus. Voice production varies through straight singing, ululation, to what could be a kind of half-falsetto, and never directly for performance in the Western sense. Instrumental and vocal combinations among the seven tracks and 52 minutes of music change from one sanza, one voice (the magnificent Martin Kyao) to two sanzas, percussion and several voices, and mixtures in between.

For the presentation of this LP I have nothing but praise. Among the labels that still release "ethnic" product, Ocora wins by a long way for consistency. The field recordings here are clear and vibrant; the musicians treated not as some faceless victim of a musicologist's microphone but as individuals with names and artistry; the information easily read and relevant but neither dry nor academic. Vincent Dehoux, responsible for recordings and text seems quite justifiably to have been taken by the sheer beauty of this music and its context. I share his opinion

Iain Scott

## DEXTER GORDON

Dexter Blows Hot And Cool

(Boplicity BOP6)

Recorded: Unstated location – 1955.

Dexter Gordon (ts); Carl Perkins (p); Jimmy Robinson (tp); Chuck Thompson (d); Leroy Vinnegar (b).

*Dexter Blows Hot And Cool* was recorded originally for the Dooto label, just after Dexter Gordon had left Chino prison, and demonstrates amply that his considerable talents had not atrophied during his eighteen-month incarceration for drug offences. Indeed, his playing ability is not noticeably lower than that of his pre-imprisonment peak. It seems that his period of enforced musical isolation had given him time to reconsider his musical objectives for the music shows that he returned to the recording studios with fresh ideas and an increased commitment to the music.

At the time of the recording, Dexter found himself out of favour, destined not to return to the fold for another five years. This fact seems almost incomprehensible after hearing the album; the music has a refreshing openness and candour that marks it down as a classic – one of the many to be recorded during a long, fruitful career.

Emblazoned across the cover is the motto "featuring Carl Perkins". This is particularly appropriate, since Perkins plays superbly. His accompaniment is exceptionally sensitive and characteristically original – this may, in part, be due to his peculiar way of playing the piano (he has his left arm parallel to the keyboard). Particularly worthy of note are his muscular accompaniment and perceptive solos on the unbelievably appealing version of the Loesser and Lane song "I Hear Music", and his exquisite introduction to "Cry Me A River", which, combined with Dexter's Lester Young-influenced method of articulating the song's lyrics on the tenor, make it possibly the best recording of a ballad either party has made.

It is, perhaps, unfair to single out individual musicians for praise, as all the musicians here play superbly. However, mention must be made of the supremely flexible rhythm team of Chuck Thompson and Leroy Vinnegar. They handle magnificently all the various styles on the album and the only criticism that can be levelled against them is that Chuck Thompson should have shown more aggression during the drum breaks on "Bonnie Rue" and "I Should Care".

Despite the fact that the album is in mono, the sound is excellent and, in fact, easily as good as many albums recorded in the Eighties. Moreover, it is a worthy addition to Boplicity's wonderful range of bop classics and deserves a place in any self-respecting record collection. Buy it!

Calvin Smith

## GUITAR SLIM

The Things That I Used To Do

(Ace CHD 111)

Recorded: New Orleans/Hollywood – 1954–56

Eddie Jones (g, voc); Ray Charles or "King" Cotton (p); Lloyd Lambert (b, saxes, d).

Eddie "Guitar Slim" Jones was the stuff of which legends are made. In 1954 his single "Things That I Used To Do" came screaming out of the South, topped the R&B charts and spent five months in the hit listings. Slim would appear on stage at this time with blue-dyed hair to match his suit, performing both in and outside the hall – thanks to his 350-ft guitar lead. He was – in the words of

an eye-witness ... "The performest man I've ever seen". Five years later he was dead – the victim of living in the fast lane – and buried with his guitar beside him.

"Things" – the title track of Ace's sixteen-track collection – could hardly have missed. Over a slow, rolling rhythmic riff from the New Orleans band, Slim's gospel-toned, very-country voice tells a tale with moral and family overtones which would delight listeners in his native Deep South. In the middle break, he clinches the appeal of his song with a guitar solo which isn't so much striking as teeth-rattling: volume turned up high, the instrument grumbles and growls its way along, only to give way to moments of lifting, melodic beauty. The whole record epitomises the dream of thousands of rural ~~children~~ *the ones who had never left* sticks making it big in Hip City but retaining his stylistic roots.

This album, which contains most of Slim's Specialty singles plus a couple which weren't issued at the time, has been assembled with love and care. Sound quality is perfect and, in fact, is in many cases better than on the original issues because the annoying overdubbed organ which marred the later ones has been removed, letting that futuristic guitar cut through.

However, it does highlight a less appealing aspect of Slim's work. The man only ever recorded about two and a half tunes So, here we have about seven remakes of "Things", with slight variations, and a similar number of brisk, amiable canters such as "Well I Done Got Over It" and "25 Lies". Mercy be, there's one track which avoids either category – the sharp autobiographical rocker "Guitar Slim" which recalls Elmore James' "Madison Shoes". Apart from that – despite highlights like the nervous, dramatic solo on "Story Of My Life" which is the best bit of playing which Slim ever committed to wax – there's a certain sameness as the two sides progress.

Nevertheless, this is a faultlessly produced retrospective on a trend-setting blues guitarist whose influence lingers on (Ray Brown cut his "Story Of My Life" as "If My Mother Hadn't Died" in Mississippi as recently as 1983) and who wrote and performed the second most recorded blues song ever. A most worthy release

Mike Atherton

#### INTERNATIONAL SWEETHEARTS OF RHYTHM International Sweethearts Of Rhythm (Rosetta RR 1312)

Recorded: AFRS – early 1945; New York – 14 October, 1945.

Various personnels headed by Anna Mae Winburn.

So here am I, yonks after reporting my first Bolden gig, and still I learn about jazz history. I mean, I've read just about every book on big bands ever to squeeze up the elevator at Foyle's but, until now, I'd never even heard of the International Sweethearts.

My loss entirely. For the Sweethearts, who riffed with the roughest between 1937–45, were obviously a band worth their weight in wordage.

Basically a black band – though their ranks included a Chinese and an Indian saxophonist, a Mexican clarinet-player and a Hawaiian trumpeter – they started out as a Mississippi school band. They set up on their own when they discovered they were being ripped off by the school authorities and, by 1941, gained gigs at Harlem's Apollo and

Savoy Ballroom, totting a book of arrangements penned by Eddie Durham, sometime differ-in-chief to the likes of Count Basie and Jimmie Lunceford. The tracks that adorn this sumptuously illustrated, immaculately annotated album stem almost entirely from radio transcriptions made during 1945–46 and prove the Sweethearts to be an amazingly hot sixteen-seventeen piece aggregation, Millinder-like in their overall approach, and packed with an array of charismatic instrumental and vocal stars.

Vi Burnsicle's tenor solo on "Sweet Georgia Brown" is a true magnifier, often guaranteed to bring yells of approval from stage-side rowdies, while "Bugle Call Rag" sports torrid statements from a tenor-player and trombonist plus a virile trumpet section headed by Tiny Davis who also sings and donates his horn to a rocking version of "Do You Wanna Jump Children?".

More boppish in tone is "Vi Vigor", a Burnside feature which suggests some debt to Lester Young; the band adopting blues-groove for "That Man of Mine", a song from a movie short to which the Sweethearts contributed; Anna Mae Winburn moves to the forefront mike for this, along with

#### GERARD SIRACUSA

Jardins De Paille  
(Grim Musiques 2)

Recorded: Marseille, France – 23 March and 19–22 June, 1983.  
Gerard Siracusa (perc.).

#### JEAN-MARC MONTERA/YVES ROBERT/ GERARD SIRACUSA

Anna S. Et Autres Histoires  
(Grim Musiques 1)

Recorded: Dunois, Paris, France – 11–12 April, 1983.  
Jean-Marc Montera (g); Yves Robert (tbn); Gerard Siracusa (perc.).

Until recently, French improvisers garnered little comment. Rarely did they figure on the big international festivals like Moers, Bracknell or Berlin's Total Music Meeting. Even records failed to put them on the map – the labels themselves were short-lived; most were laid to rest before they were properly out of napkins.

But now things appear to be on the up-turn. Labels like In & Out and Nato are establishing the more idiosyncratic of French musicians within an international context. And with the firming-up of distribution links, the future for new labels looks comparatively rosy.

The most recent of them is Grim with its first run concentrating the label's activities on the domestic front – in particular, the percussionist Gerard Siracusa.

*Jardins De Paille* is a solo offering – and the busiest of the two records, kept buoyant by its concentrated detail to melody and tonal exotica. In his use of metal-tuned percussives, he calls to mind the music of the gamelan – elsewhere it's his stylistic affinities with fellow Europeans Andrea Centazzo and Pierre Favre which make themselves apparent. The title track is pertinent introduction –

"Central Avenue Boogie", despite the name, another piece of bluesware. Then, too, there's the all-the-fun of the final track, a rendition of "One O'Clock Jump" that's more of a giant-sized free-for-all involving not only the Sweethearts but also the Jubilee show's AFRS house band – thirty-six musicians in all!

But there's not a dull cut to be heard and, elsewhere – on scores penned mainly by Maurice King, the band's staff arranger of the period and, more recently, a winter-arranger for Gladys Knight and the Detroit Spinners – the Sweethearts play with such verve and vitality that when *Ultra-mp3 inc.* Ernie Whitman describes them as "solid senders, ready to lift you right out of this cosmos", you feel inclined to agree. Especially when pivotal drummer Pauline Braddy utilises a fierce-paced "Lady Be Good" to demonstrate a line in technical trickery taught her by the likes of Jo Jones and Sid Catlett.

But, surely, Pauline Braddy was a woman? Well, right. Did I forget to mention that the Sweethearts were all women?

Well, what does it matter? Fine band, anyway

Fred Dollar

opening with a section of call-and-response, and later building into a carefully orchestrated whole. Even better are the three melodic teasers – where quick changes between different surfaces are arranged as a musical patchwork. "Chris' Reveries" threatens, in its later stages, to burst into a frenetic calypso routine, while "Don't Let The Ghost Drums Get You Down" (the only disappointment) sees him embrace the conventions of trap-drumming – but with little individual effect.

On the group session, Anna S. Et Autres Histoires, Siracusa veers between the idly metronomic and the sparing – feeling the space, knowing when to leave the music to breathe. His partners boast stronger allegiances to convention – guitarist Montera has, like his fellow countryman Raymond Boni, extended the instrument's Pass-style vocabulary, making tasteful use of volume and effects pedals, while trombonist Robert is clearly of the Albert Mangelsdorff school. Although "free", the music comes close to sharp stylistic reference – the MOR ballad-style development of the title track and the Russian-style waltz figure on "Le Jeune Homme's Mere". "Partage" finds Montera and Siracusa designing mosaic over the trombone's dirone-like presence; "Invitus-Invitamus" builds from the gentle see-saw of Montera and Robert, underpinned by Siracusa's tight, sustained rolls on the snare, while "Une Certaine Inclinaison" features a more animated group action – sharp contrapuntal dialogue leads into a brief solo interlude from Montera, then out again into a glorious twisting routine prompted by Robert's extrovert blowing.

An altogether endearing, vital record that gives more with each play. David Illic



I DIDN'T GIVE A DAMN IF WHITES BOUGHT IT (THE RALPH BASS SESSIONS)  
VOLS I, 2 & 3  
Recorded: PS Studios, Chicago – March-April 1977.

#### VOL I (Red Lightnin' RL0050)

Recorded: 9 March, 1977.

Lacy Gibson (g, voc) with Sunnyland Slim (p); Willy Black (b); Fred Below (d). Recorded: 5 April, 1977.

Joe Carter (slide g, voc) with Lacy Gibson (g); Sunnyland Slim (p); Willy Black (b); Fred Below (d).

#### VOL II (Red Lightnin' RL0051)

Recorded: 29 March, 1977.

Jimmy Johnson (g, voc) with Bob Riedy (p); David Matheros (b); John Hier (d). Recorded: 14 March, 1977.

Eddie Clearwater (g, voc) with Aaron Burton (b); Sam Lay (d); Thomas Eckert (g); Bob Riedy (p).

#### VOL III (Red Lightnin' RL0052)

Recorded: 17 March, 1977.

Willie Williams (d, voc) with Carey Bell (hca); Sunnyland Slim (p); Lacy Gibson (g); Willie Black (b).

Recorded: 22 March, 1977.

Magic Slim (g, voc) with Coleman Pettis (g); Nick Holt (b); Douglas Holt (d).

Recorded in March and April 1977, these three albums – produced by Ralph Bass – encompass the atmosphere and styles that characterise the living blues coming out of Chicago's Southside blues clubs. Each album features two artists, given a side each to show their command of the idiom, and these three volumes certainly demonstrate that the power and strength of the Chicago blues has never flagged despite an apparent lapse in interest from the media.

Vol I features Lacy Gibson, a skilled guitarist seen in Britain backing Otis Rush and well known in Chicago as an outstanding sideman. Here, he proves his worth as a leader in his own right, with five numbers showing off his emotive vocals. Some fine guitar playing

here. Side Two has Joe Carter in good form on bottleneck guitar, with a set recalling the great Elmore James. Joe shows up well on these tracks, picking some searing slide-guitar licks from his old Epiphone hollow body.

Vol II has sets from Jimmy Johnson and Eddie Clearwater. Johnson is a guitarist/vocalist much admired among the newer breed. His five songs here, show him to be a powerful exponent of the blues, his style lying somewhere between Freddie and Albert King. He uses his Gibson 335 to particularly good effect on a slow ballad – "When My First Wife Quit Me", and the instrumental showcase – "Pepper's Hangout". Eddie Clearwater's set features the lanky left-hander in familiar high spirits on "Boogie My Blues Away", and has an outstanding track – "Muddy Waters Goin' Run Clear", with superb harp-playing courtesy of Little Mac Simmons. These sessions – excellently documented by Ralph Bass – are further evidence, if any were needed, of Eddie Clearwater's position in the very forefront of the Chicago blues scene.

Vol III highlights drummer/vocalist Willie Williams with old favourite Carey Bell on harmonica, and the fine guitarist/vocalist Magic Slim playing here with his own regular band. Willie Williams's set provides some good moments with a voice that can only be the result of a severe case of laryngitis or a surfeit of whisky and cigarettes, or both. Some excellent lead guitar from Lacy Gibson on these tracks. Magic Slim's four songs are an excellent sampler of the modern Chicago sound, with a tight band featuring his brothers Nick and Douglas Holt on bass and drums respectively, and second guitar by Coleman Pettis. Slim's tough down-home brand of blues comes over well here and this set is best played loud.

Some good performances, then, and a nicely presented series of lovingly recorded and produced albums, with interesting and informative sleeve-notes and track details. A good package from Peter Shertser's Red Lightnin' label.

Tom Nolan

#### KANTATA

Asiko  
(Oval OVLP 508)

Recorded: West Berlin – 1984.

Lee Dodou (voc, g); James Wilson (g); Eddy Sey (kbds); Sylvester Kwame (b g); Faoud Amoo (d); Emmanuel Roberts (s); (guest) Ekow Brown (perc).

Although Hi-life has been exposed to American popular music since its inception in the Twenties, the main body of the Ghanaian strain seems to have opted for a mannered simplicity of presentation, not unlike early Sixties ska. When Oval brought George Darko's *Hi-life Time* (Oval OVLP 509) to Britain last year, we heard a sound far more geared towards the soul ear. Kantata were also formed last year, when they left Darko's outfit to set up on their own. They appear to be continuing the venture, mixing in soul and Caribbean influences and sounds.

The first thing that ought to be said is that a hi-life stripped of its usual primitive sound is by no means so superficially attractive, especially among audiences bombarded with smooth and glossy pop fluff... the local hi-life stands out because of its "quaintness" and, before we're bored with it as novelty, its genuinely subtle and gentle tangle of guitar and wry dry voice has netted us.

Of course, Kantata are aiming for the dance-floor, and for airplay, and deserve both; impossible to deny they'd sound well in those contexts. But as an LP? Forced against it critically, I found the initial exploration (usually the best bit, the excitement of a new logic of song) somehow elusive. Attention kept straying, these pop-hooks and slippery soul synths weren't meant to be listened to in this deliberate way. In time, authentic hi-life structure and Dodou's voice worked their spell, reaching up through the plain shiny surface to pull me in. But it took time that didn't seem well spent. (We might compare it with Sunny Ade's fusion of Juju and Electro, put together with a startling violence that immediately left its mark: to undercut this observation, we should point out that *Aura* (Island ILPS 9746) didn't sell well in his home-country. If British audiences are likely to think African more fashionable than slick soul, it's quite possible that sophisticated

Sometimes, *Sey, Jagger, Chaponi, Papsoul and Lee Dodou* — collectively, Kantata.



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Accra audiences see things the other way about.

"Asiko" is nothing if not pleasant, once it has made its intentions clear. The three songs on Side One – "Duke", "Killy Me" and "Akpeteshie Special" – are all more plainly African in idiom, with (quasi)improvised percussion nibbling away at the rigidity of the beat and dissolving the hard edges. Side Two is more openly pop-bound. "Asiko" is an attempt to prove that Ghanaians are quite as capable as anyone else at turning out inconsequential injunctions to groove. "Let's Fall in Love Again" is slight and sweet, "Side Issue" a mild funk.

If African pop is going to break into Western markets, it might do itself a long-term favour if it showed a little more confidence in its own tradition. Hi-life had already drawn a lot from soul. If it draws too much more, it disappears altogether. Kantata aren't in danger of that but the threat of erasure gently suffuses this record.

Mark Sinker

### MARK NAUSEEF (featuring JACK BRUCE)

Wun-Wun  
(CIMP Records CMP 25 ST)

Recorded: Brunwey Studios, Hamburg; Wendelstein Studios, Miesbach; Rocksound Studios, Munich – between January and May 1984.

Mark Nauseef (reyoung, gender, modified conga, arimb, kempur, mbira, onaprah, Yamaha PS-1, vce, osi slit drum, marimba, vacu-horn, Chinese opera gongs, selnyen, balaphon, chime bars, "magic drum"); Jack Bruce (vce, b); Trilok Gurtu (vce); Walter Guitius (onaprah, vln).

Wun-Wun is Nauseef's most highly evolved and interesting project to date. It is characterised by his fascination with the sounds of African and Asian percussion instruments and, like Steve Reich for example, with the cyclic rhythm figures they deploy. Unlike Reich, Nauseef allows himself to shape his music vigorously rather than through the slow unravelling and progress of internal detail.

In the same vein, Nauseef has not simply misappropriated the music of more exotic cultures and made it his own but rather has used it as a starting point for his own constructions.

In this he is joined, significantly, by Jack Bruce. It is the use of Bruce's extraordinary voice – often overdubbed with his wordless phrases weaving through each other (as in the opening track "Colotomix"), or the solo multi-tracked vocals of "Colotomix II" which close the set) – which goes a long way

MARK NAUSEEF



towards stamping an individual identity on this recording.

The tension between percussion and voice is reflected again in the use of Bruce's bass work and Guitius's violin play, the latter deployed particularly nightmarishly during "Language (It's Medicinal)" where the voices of Bruce and Gurtu also trade long sustain and bubbling, near-scat work over Bruce's bass.

In reducing his music to the two simple elements of percussion and voice (only occasionally augmenting them with bass or violin), Nauseef has cut away the rather anonymous elements of his earlier work and concentrated attention on bold, unambivalent statement. Kenneth Ansell



### SONNY ROLLINS TRIO St Thomas – In Stockholm 1959 (Dregon DR LP 73)

Recorded: Stockholm – March 1959.  
Sonny Rollins (ts); Henry Grimes (b); Pete La Roca (d).

From a quarter of a century ago, the transfixing sound of genius in flight...

In the late Fifties, Sonny Rollins' albums for Prestige, Blue Note and Contemporary had established him as the major new tenor voice. There was a feeling of "bigness" – of tone, swing, vision – in everything he did, aptly caught by the LP title *Saxophone Colossus*. His musical appetite seemed as enormous as his talent; he bolted expertly through the rhythmic trickles of Monk and Max Roach, and ate up standards with the relish of a saxist Desperate Dan. St Thomas catches him at the peak of this first great creative burst.

So of these seven tracks are Swedish Radio recordings, introduced by Rollins himself in curiously wooden tones; the other, "St Thomas", is live; taped by a fan during the trio's stay at Stockholm's Nalen Club. Rollins romps through the set with a giant's authority; yet, just months later, he had retired for the second of his famous "sabbaticals" to rethink his playing. Armed with this hindsight, it is tempting to scrutinise St Thomas for signs of discontent – and there is a restlessness in the air, a brusque edge to his power (listen to "I've Told Every Little Star"), as if nothing he knows can assuage his hunger for new challenges.

He reshapes almost compulsively, breaking "St Thomas" into fragments, taking "How High The Moon" that far from base and transmuting the almost parodic ripeness with which he begins "Stay As Sweet As You Are" into a lighter, leaner lyricism.

His playing is brilliant, daunting, almost

epic. At times Rollins seems driven by some elemental musical force that eclipses all personal voicings: the artist engulfed by the sheer power of his art. No wonder he had to rest; no wonder he hasn't kept up that pace in the Seventies and Eighties. St Thomas is Sonny Rollins riding the storm. Graham Lock

#### THE UNITED JAZZ AND ROCK ENSEMBLE

United Live Opus Sechs  
(Mood - Mood 43)

Recorded: Theaterhaus Stuttgart - 30 June & 1 July, 1984.

Ian Carr, Johannes Faber, Ack Van Rooyen (tpt, flh); Wolfgang Dauner (p); Jon Hiseman (d); Volker Kriegel (g); Albert Mangelsdorff (tbn); Charlie Mariano (ss, as); Barbara Thompson (ss, ts); Eberhard Weber (b).

The United Jazz And Rock Ensemble is basically an aggregation of musicians and band leaders who congregate about once a year in order to play compositions that may not, for various reasons, be particularly suitable for performance by their own groups. Thus, the band can be said to be essentially an approximate amalgamation of Eberhard Weber's Colours and Barbara Thompson's Paraphernalia, together with various "star" musicians.

Considering human nature, it is perhaps not altogether surprising that the results of such a collaboration are generally more interesting than most of the individual musicians' solo performances. Consider, for example, Barbara Thompson's offering "Die Wiederkehr": with the backdrop of a superbly swinging horn section she has evoked the spirit of Miles Davis without copying any of his styles or compositional mannerisms and, against this, she has played probably the longest, most beautiful soprano solo Wayne Shorter never played.

However, it is the three trumpeters who make the most important contributions to the sound of the album. It's not often that a horn section contains a preponderance of brass instruments but the hard, punching sound that is produced – especially with the inclusion for this album of Johannes Faber – fully justifies such a stand. Moreover, their solos are incredible – for instance, the amazing trumpet dialogue between Ack Van Rooyen and Johannes Faber on Albert Mangelsdorff's "Rip Off" or Ian Carr's sumptuous Harman muted solo on his own "Lady Boundful".

Nevertheless, the rhythm section is not overshadowed: Eberhard Weber is his customarily brilliant self; Jon Hiseman provides the prerequisite amounts of fire and discipline; Volker Kriegel skilfully alternates between chording and playing the melody, while still playing a wonderful solo on the aforementioned "Lady Boundful", and Wolfgang Dauner demonstrates that he is very much under-rated by playing a beautifully panoramic solo on Volker Kriegel's "Garberville", and by composing the tintinabulating "Wenderkreis Des Steinbocks", which includes a superb solo by Eberhard Weber. The fact that there are only the two United Jazz and Rock Ensemble albums and a superb solo album on ECM (ECM 1006 ST) available in this country is deplorable – more of Dauner's work should be released.

My advice is that you should get at least two copies of this album – if you have any taste you'll wear out the first within a week.

Calvin Smith



#### THE VIENNA ART ORCHESTRA

The Minimalism Of Erik Satie  
(Hat Art 2005)

Recorded: Studio Kornhausl, Vienna, Austria – 20, 21 & 22 September, 1983, and 14 March, 1984.

Matthias Ruegg (leader, conductor, arranger); Lauren Newton (vce); Karl "Bumi" Fian (tpf, flg); Hannes Kottek (tp, flg); Christian Radovan (tbn); John Sasse (tuba); Harry Sokal (ss, ts, fit); Wolfgang Puschning (as, soprano s, b cl, fit); Roman Schwaller (ts, cit); Woody Shabatta (vib); Wolfgang Reisinger (gongs, kalimba, tarabuka, triangle); plus Ima (tamboura).

#### PART OF ART

Son Sauvage

(Extraplatte EX 316 135)

Recorded: Muhle Hunziken, Austria – March 1983.

Herbert Joos (tp, flg); Wolfgang Puschning (as, b cl); Uli Scherer (p, melodica); Jürgen Wucher (b); Wolfgang Reisinger (d, perc).

#### THE VIENNA ART CHOIR

From No Art To Mo-(z)-Art

(Moers Music 2002)

Recorded: Studio Kornhauserl, Vienna, Austria – May 1983.

Matthias Ruegg (composer, leader, conductor, arranger); George Lewis (tbn); Lauren Newton (lead vce, voc solos); Wolfgang Puschning (as, soprano s, b cl, pic, fits); Christian Radovan (tbn); Renate Bochdansky (soprano vce); Maria Bayer (alto vce); Lis Malina (alto vce); Sharon Natalie (alto vce); Patricia Gaya (alto vce); Karin Riesner (alto vce); Peter Jelots (tenor vce); Kurt Azeberger (tenor vce); Christof Prinz (baritone vce); Roland Steiner (baritone vce); Winfried Stelzmüller (bass vce); Johannes Prinz (bass vce, choir leader).

The Vienna Art Orchestra is rooted firmly and confidently within the jazz genre, as other recordings (including those broadcast by Peter Clayton on his

radio slot) clearly indicate. Yet under its leader and guiding force, Matthias Ruegg, it has embarked on a series of extraordinarily diverse projects, overhauling expectations to stand defiantly beyond narrow genre classifications.

It is as if the Vienna Art Orchestra were an umbrella under which such activity thrives without sacrificing the crucial VA identity.

Two such projects are to be found in *From No Art To Mo-(z)-Art* and *The Minimalism Of Erik Satie*. The former features regular VA vocalist Lauren Newton, accompanied by a selection of musicians from the Orchestra and a full choir, the latter the full orchestra minus conventional drum-kit.

Satie's music has always boasted a timeless simplicity and sophistication: he wrote nigglingly effective tunes which were compelling, strong and elusive. Ruegg has taken a handful of Satie's compositions and arranged them faithfully for the Orchestra and sequenced each into his own "Reflections On...". Between them, they have captured the fragile lyricism and spare textures of Satie and wed them to the Orchestra's strengths: discipline, firm vigorous tone and a commanding improvisatory fluency.

Ruegg has set Satie for a range of instrumental resources, from full orchestra (as on "Gnossienne No.1"), to brittle clockwork, vife-dominated small-group textures for "Idyll" and its "Reflections", or solo (as in Christian Radovan's fine solo trombone performance of "Gymnopédie No.3").

Ruegg relinquishes the second record of this double album to three members of the Orchestra and three reworkings of "Vexations". These contrast the cold, stately reflective and unwavering vibes continuum performance of the theme with a flexible element – that of the soloist, spiralling fluidly off at organic tangents. Schwaller, Newton and Puschning contribute virtuoso performances.

Both halves of the set proffer articulate, attractive music; characteristically luminous and beguiling after Satie.

Lauren Newton is also the featured soloist on the more compressed *From No-Art To Mo-(z)-Art* which channels eleven sections into the 42-minute work. These sections draw together a broad sweep through vocal music styles and idioms; from pre-musical tribal utterance to the high vocal art of Mozart's style (in a superbly almost raw, sleazy performance) incorporating scat, plainchant and Ligeti-like clusters.

In this setting Newton excels. Her voice responds to the differing demands the differing idioms place upon them and rises to the challenge. Left to her own devices she adopts the mid-ground somewhere between Norma Winstone and Maggie Nicols but, more importantly, makes it her own.

*It is Part of Art* – a small grouping of VAO members – who emphasise the more strictly jazz strengths of VAO activity out of these three releases. They do so in a brace of idiosyncratic

compositions: the almost tongue-in-cheek "Walking Josephine", the Weill/Eisler flavoured "Dance In A Secret Garden", or the quicksilver piano and whiplash ensemble chords of "Son Sauvage", for example.

The compositions give space for some excellent solo features which demonstrate again the power of the individual musicians within the VA family. On "Son Sauvage", Herbert Joos gives a breathy, Hassell-ish trumpet feature; a meaty Puschin saxophone solo during "Walking Josephine", and some lovely muted brass during "Continued Talks", all testify to this. Studio techniques, such as overdubbing, are effectively deployed with telling restraint.

As I have indicated, each of these records has its strengths, deserves close attention. However, it is *The Minimalism Of Erik Satie* which is the jewel in this particular triptych. A record of exceptional stature and beauty.

Although not widely known in Britain, the VAO is firmly established on the Continent and has been exceptionally well received during a recent visit to the States. Plans are afoot for the Orchestra to visit Britain later this year and, if either reports or recordings are any indication, appetites should already be whet in anticipation. Kenneth Ansell

provided one of those endearing oddities which so enrich the r&b scene. On "Crazy String", he struts his bluesy stuff over a rhythmic track best suited to a German beer-drinking song.

The vocal inclusions have their highlights, too: Ray Sharpe's singing and guitar-playing live up to his surname on "My Baby's Gone", and the totally mysterious Gene Vell commits to wax a wild, inspired vocal performance on the plodding "Screaming And Crying All Night Long". Add the likes of Joe Hughes and Earl Gilliam (Houston) or Travis Phillips and The Daylighters (Fort Worth) and you have two records which will intrigue you, charm you and make you want to break into an old-time shuffle. Mike Atherton

#### DOMINIK VON SINGER

##### The First

(VeraBra Records No 7)

Recorded: X Studio, Cologne; Matrix Studios, London.

Domini von Singer (g., Yamaha-synth, Casiotone, flt); Stefan Krachten (d); Rosko Gee (b); Helmut Zerlett (Prophet-synth, ac piano); Reiner Linke (perc); Olek Gelba (perc); Matthias Keul (ac b); Kelly Ancel (vce on "Turnaround" and "Serial No."); Willy Wollstein (vce on "Dilacu"); Wolfgang Klangenberg (sax); Stefan Thelen (additional d on "Dilacu").

When Can's rhythm lynch-pin Jaki Liebezeit put his solo project, the Phantom Band, together he enrolled guitarist Dominik von Singer. For his part, Singer has returned the compliment by selecting a rhythmic section that recalls Can. Rosko Gee was a member of that group, while Krachten's crisp, metronomic style is reminiscent of Liebezeit.

Above the rhythm Singer floats aerated arrangements, dominated by his own spavine, iridescent guitar. And it is here the comparisons with Can come to an end; the music on this record is more relaxed, less uneasy than anything Can ever produced. *The First* is a rich, mature album in its own right, with just two tracks detracting from its sturdiness.

Unfortunately, these two tracks are crucially positioned. The muddy, uptempo "Blow-off", the penultimate track on the first side and the disposable "Dilacu" (second track, Side Two) come close to derailing the momentum of the set; but the firm beauty of the remaining eight tracks sustains the listener and generously rewards tenacity

Kenneth Ansell

#### MAL WALDRON

##### Breaking New Ground

(Baybridge Records KUX 180 B)

Recorded: New York City - 28 & 29 June, 1983.

Mal Waldron (p); Ed Blackwell (d); Reggie Workman (b).

Mal Waldron has, as he says, "worked all sides of the street" from swing to bop to free, played with giants like Mingus, Roach, Holiday, Dolphy, Lacy, and revised his music through slow but steady change over the years, all part of his quest to "get free and of his later subtlety.

One might suspect compiler Ray Topping

of having chosen the selections on the basis

of sheer obscurity: names like Royal Earl And

The Swinging Kools or H.L. Hubbard And The Jets, though they evoke a whole different

place and time, do not trip easily from the lips. Luckily, listening to the albums reveals that musical considerations were paramount in their compilation.

The Texas style of blues highlights sharp,

flash guitar-picking over a constrictively

mellow horn backdrop – indeed, the hornmen were often moonlighting jazz

musicians. Nearly half the tracks are

instrumental, giving the listener the chance

to study the guitar styles of players such as

Collins, Earl and Cal Valentine, as well as

Clarence Green who, on the Houston LP,

The following have been released, or imported, since the last issue went to press. Except where a date is shown, they are believed to be recent recordings and no liability can be accepted for inaccurate information. Listing here does not preclude a subsequent review.

GEORGE ADAMS, HANNIBAL & FRIENDS: *More Sightlegs* (Enja 4084).

CHEF BAKER: *I Remember You* (Circle RK 2380/2B); *Playz Lemmer and Loewe* (1959) (Riverside OJC 137).

JAC BERRIOCAL, BRITISH SUMMERTIME ENDS, JOELLE LEANDRE, DENIS LEVAILLANT, ANNICK NOZATI & ALAN TOMLINSON: *Six Sequences For Alfred Hitchcock* (Nato 304).

BIG BLACK: *Ethnic Fusion* (1750 Arch S-1790).

JAMES BOOKER: *King of the New Orleans Keyboard* Vol 2 (late Seventies) (JSP 1086).

TOM BUCKNER, GERALD OSHTA & ROSCOE MITCHELL: *New Music for Woodwinds and Voice* (1750 Arch S-1785).

CELESTRIAL COMMUNICATIONS ORCHESTRA: *Plays Alan Silvia's Sun* (SEB 003).

TEDDY CHARLES w/SHORTY ROGERS: *Collaboration West* (1953) (Prestige OJC 122).

GUIGOU CHENEVIER & SOPHIE JAUSSETARD: *A La Vie Des Micro-Climats* (Recommended REC MUSIC 07).

ORNETTE COLEMAN: *Something Else!* (1958) (Contemporary OJC 163).

JOHN COLTRANE: *Lush Life* (1957-58) (Prestige OJC 131).

KEN COLYER: *Live at the Dancing Sipper* (1960) (VJM LC 35).

BOB COOPER: *Cool!* (1967) (Contemporary OJC 161).

LINDSAY COOPER, JOELLE LEANDRE & MAGGIE NICOLAS: *Live At The Bassline* (Sun Pulse 1789).

LARRY CORVELL & MICHAEL URBANIAK: *A Quiet Day in Spring* (Steepchase SCS 1167).

CURTIS COUNCE: *You Get More Bounce*, with (1956) (Contemporary OJC 159).

LOL COXHILL: *The Dunois Solos* (Nato 95).

#### VARIOUS ARTISTS

Houston Shuffle

(Krazy Kat 7425)

VARIOUS ARTISTS

Fort Worth Shuffle

(Krazy Kat 7426)

Recorded: Fort Worth, Dallas, San Antonio and Houston, Texas – 1958-66.

Texas can lay fair claim to being the birthplace of electric blues with Aaron "T-Bone" Walker plugging his guitar in as early as 1943. Walker and other leading Texan artists such as Freddie King and Albert Collins have been well documented on record; but post-war Houston and Fort Worth were teeming nests of musical activity, alive with little record labels, the quantity and quality of whose waxings is only now becoming apparent.

These twin Krazy Kat albums publish – for the first time in Britain – twenty-eight tracks which were not only previously unobtainable but, in many cases, unheard of as well. The only familiar artist is Albert Collins, here presented on his early "Freeze" and "Collins Shuffle", displaying the ice-cold guitar style which would win him fame, though little of his later subtlety.

One might suspect compiler Ray Topping of having chosen the selections on the basis of sheer obscurity: names like Royal Earl And The Swinging Kools or H.L. Hubbard And The Jets, though they evoke a whole different place and time, do not trip easily from the lips. Luckily, listening to the albums reveals that musical considerations were paramount in their compilation.

The Texas style of blues highlights sharp, flash guitar-picking over a constrictively mellow horn backdrop – indeed, the hornmen were often moonlighting jazz musicians. Nearly half the tracks are instrumental, giving the listener the chance to study the guitar styles of players such as Collins, Earl and Cal Valentine, as well as Clarence Green who, on the Houston LP,

demonstrates again his powerful sense of rhythm. The "new ground" refers not to any radical change of style but to the album's untypical choice of material, the result of a Japanese request for Waldron to record some pop songs. So he plays tunes associated with Michael Jackson, Stevie Wonder, George Benson, Earth Wind And Fire; the theme from *M.A.S.H.*; two Waldron originals; and, oddest choice of all, a version of Satie's "Gymnopédie No 2".

Even these diverse sources are subsumed within Waldron's skill for understatement. He strips each song down to its basics; reworking, invigorating, rhythms with subtle shifts of emphasis. He's helped enormously in this task by Ed Blackwell and Reggie Workman – two of the strongest, most sensitive rhythm men in the music.

Such overfamiliar fare as "You Are The Sunshine Of My Life" and "Everything Must Change" is re-energised by Waldron's honed-down hard swing, while the brief, droll "Beat It" is a masterpiece of précis – piano and bass functional while Blackwell's dancing drums swing the beat. From Satie, too, he conjures new resonance: slowed down, spaced-out, each note the tolling of a great bell.

The LP closes on Waldron's own "They Freed Me Come", a last loose filing which sees the trio at their freest. The title continues a Waldron series, from "The Call For Arms" through "Black Glory" and "Free At Last", which anticipates an end to the radix attitude which drove him out of America in 1965. "It's improved a little bit for Black people but it's still not where it's supposed to be", is how he sees the situation now. One recompense, at least: that he has lived in Europe for the last twenty years has been entirely our gain.

Graham Lock

# RECENT RELEASES

BING CROSBY: *Bing In The Thirties Vol 2* (early Thirties) (JSP 1084).

DEBILLE MENTHOL: *Batte Campagne* (Recommended RBC MUSIC 06).

BUDDY DE FRANCO w/MARTIN TAYLOR: *On Tour USA* (Mep HEP 2023).

ERIC DOLPHY: *At the Five Spot Vol 1* (1961) (New Jazz OJC 133).

TEDDY EDWARDS: *Heart and Soul* (1962) (Contemporary OJC 177).

BILL EVANS: *Sunday at the Village Vanguard* (1961) (Riverside OJC 149).

VIOLETA FERRER: *Poemas de F.G. Lorca 2* (Nato 124).

RUSS FREEMAN ANDRE PREVIN: *Double Play* (1957) (Contemporary OJC 157).

STAN GETZ: *Quartet* (1949-50) (Prestige OJC 121).

BENNY GOLSON: *New York Scene* (1967) (Contemporary OJC 164).

BENNY GOODMAN: *Breakfast Ball* (1934) (Saville SVL 172).

GREG GOODMAN, HENRY KAISER & JON ROSE: *The Construction of Ruins* (The Book Doctor 4).

JOE GORDON: *Looking Good* (1961) (Contemporary OJC 174).

STEPHANE GRAPPELLI & MARC FOSSET: *Looking At You* (JMS 033).

JOHNNY GRIFFIN: *The Little Giant* (1969) (Riverside OJC 136).

BUDDY GUY: *Ten Blue Fingers* (late Seventies/early Eighties) (ISP 1085).

ALAN HACKER: *Hacker UK* (Nato 214).

HAMPTON HAWES: *Here and Now* (1965) (Contemporary OJC 178).

ERWIN HELFER, ANGELA BROWN, CLARK DEAN & ODIE PAYNE: *Live at the Piano Man* (Steeplechase SCH 9003).

MILT JACKSON QUINTET/MODERN JAZZ QUARTET: MJQ (1954-52); (Prestige OJC 125).

KHAN JAMAL: *Our Warmer* (Steeplechase SCS 1196).

ANDRE JAUME QUARTET & GROUPE TAVAGNA: *Insouci* (Nato 194).

ROONEY JONES & TOMMY FLANAGAN: *My Funny Valentine* (Timeless SJP 162).

THAD JONES: *Three and One* (Steeplechase SCS 1197).

CLIFFORD JORDAN w/KENNY DORHAM: *Swing Time* (1961) (Jazzland OJC 147).

DUKE JORDAN: *Truth* (1975) (Steeplechase SCS 1175).

BARNEY KESSEL: *Some Like it Hot* (1959) (Contemporary OJC 168); *Feeling Free* (1968) (Contemporary OJC 179).

HAROLD LAND: *Harold in the Land of Hi Fi* (1958) (Contemporary OJC 162); *West Coast Blues* (1960) (Jazzland OJC 146).

CY LAURIE: *Shades of Cy* (Sunstreamer S/12/L/A 1).

JAY LEONHARDT w/JOE BECK: *There's Gonna Be Trouble* (Sunmynde SSC 1006).

SHELLY MANNE: *Vol 1 West Coast Sound* (1953) (Contemporary OJC 152); *The Three and the Two* (1954) (Contemporary OJC 172).

MARKOVIC/GUT SEXTET: *Message from Belgrade* (Timeless SJP 195).

GEORGE MARSH: *Marshtand* (1750 Arch S-1791).

THE MELODY FOUR: *Love Plays Such Funny Games* (Chabodee OH6).

HANK MOBLEY, AL COHN, JOHN COLTRANE & ZOOT SIMS: *Tenor Conclave* (1956) (Prestige OJC 127).

THELONIOUS MONK: *At Town Hall* (1959) (Riverside OJC 135).

MONTGOMERY BROTHERS: *Groove Yard* (1962) (Riverside OJC 139).

TAKEO MORIYAMA: *Green River* (Enja 4080).

MARI MURPHY: *Rain* (1951) (Riverside OJC 141).

PHINEAS NEWBORN: *A World of Peine* (1961) (Contemporary OJC 178).

OVA: *Possibilities* (Strappy Cow SC 444).

JEAN-LUC PONTY: *Open Mind* (Polydor B23-581-1Y).

CHARLIE PARKER: *Bird on 52nd Street* (1948) (Jazz Workshop OJC 114).

EVAN PARKER, GEORGE LEWIS, BARRY GUY, PAUL LYTTON: *Hook, Orift and Shuffle* (Incus 45).

ENRICO PIERANUO: *New Lands* (Timeless SJP 211).

ANDRE PREVIN: *Like Previn* (1960) (Contemporary OJC 170).

THE QUARTET (TOMASZ SZUKALSKI et al): *Loaded* (Leo 010).

JIMMY RANEY & DOUG RAINEY: *Nerds* (Steeplechase SCS 1184).

SONNY ROLLINS w/JOHN COLTRANE: *Tenor Madness* (1956) (Prestige OJC 124).

HOWARD RUMSEY: *Sunday Jazz a la Lighthouse* (1953) (Contemporary OJC 151); *Oboe/Fire* (1954-56) (Contemporary OJC 154).

SONG OF BLUES: *Where's My Money* (Steeplechase SCS 9004).

SPRITS OF RHYTHM w/TEDDY BUNN: *Rhythm Personified* (early Thirties) (JSP 1088).

TOMASZ STANKO: *Almost Green* (1978) (Leo 008).

SUNNYLAND SLIM: *Sunnyland Train* (Steeplechase SCS 9002).

TEXTURE SEXTET: *Texture Sextet* (IACP 7001).

TRIO IMPROVVISAZIONE: *Like a Breath* (Metallanguage 121).

UNKNOWNMIX: UK (UK Records UX04).

MAL WALDRON: *Impressions* (1968) (Prestige OJC 132).

JAMES WILLIAMS: *Alter Ego* (Sunmynde SSC 1007).

MAMA YANCEY: *Maybe I'll Cry* (Steeplechase SCS 9001).

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# THE MIKE ZWERIN COLUMN

WITHIN the last year I have become obsessed by the fact that I may well spend my old age in a place where I have no roots or no old family or friends. Fifteen years of exile is no lark, not even a canary.

The loneliness and isolation has begun to take my breath away. Literally breathtaking. A gasp rather than a gas.

There is nobody to call, you know when – in the middle of the night, an old buddy to hang on to. There are new buddies but they are still budding. Where are the flowers? I had a buddy named Bloom but he left me to waltz on Wilshire Boulevard.

This was not intentional. I sent myself to Paris on a sort of permanent loan, like a painting you hang. Fifteen years – I do not write charts for my life, I blow it. It is beginning to be a cadenza, A-capella. I blow it. I am home.

A recent humming conversation with Red Mitchell in Warsaw was a humdinger. I do not know Red very well, though we played together in New York in the Forties. But we have had similar lives full of the

richness and pain of marriages, children, music, poverty and exile. We were immediately so close, so personal, although we had not seen each other in thirty years. How long since I had such a conversation.

Red moved to Sweden in 1968 because, although there is only an inch of difference between values in the United States and Europe, it is the inch we both live in. He explained himself: "The world is divided into two major 'isms'. One says me-first, the other group-first. America and Russia. Man is both an individual and a group animal. And the crime is we are told we must choose. Either/or. I refuse to choose. Anybody who says I must deny one side of my nature is in big trouble with me."

"Isn't jazz a perfect model of the two sides of our nature? You can hear two notes from Zoot Sims and you know it's Zoot. At the same time he's kicking the rhythm section. It adds up to more than the sum of four people."

"I find Sweden comes closest to letting me be myself completely. I pay higher taxes there but I don't mind because they go for health care, not to invade Grenada. Americans ask me how I can live in a place that has one of the highest suicide rates in the world. I tell them I'd rather live next door to someone who might take their own life than someone who might take mine. I feel in tune with the majority in Sweden. I am totally out of tune with the majority in America."

Good enough. Me, too. Then why do I have to sneak my horn past customs when I work in England? Why am I not eligible for a subsidy from the French Government? I am totally legal here, with a working permit and residence card (French dentists have ruined my teeth, my kid corrects my French). Why do I get the shivers when I go to Germany? Why does Denmark depress me? How many evenings have I spent alone in a hotel room in Brussels? Rhetorical questions. Some European!

But there is that essential inch. (Why do I still say inch, not centimeter?) A bumpy distance by any measure. Fifteen years. I amaze myself with these graphs. I had no intention to face my alienation again today. This was to be a light good-natured piece about Red Mitchell, a newsworthy fellow, with a happy ending.

Don't take it seriously. Forget it as a matter of fact. Sometimes I sketch myself and then colour someone else in between. A blur, a smear, a slip, a blip on the computer. Tilt. I am a hero in many novels I will never write. Right, Rite.

The plot thickens.

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# DEAR WIRE

MIKE WESTBROOK WRITES:

I read with interest Kenneth Ansell's account of the history of AMM. It is a fascinating story. I have just one reservation. I think the group's account of their formation is misleading and illustrates the danger of re-writing history to make it suit one's current position. This is all too likely to happen now that musicians of our generation are being asked to look back twenty years at the early days of our careers.

Let's all try to be honest and truthful not like fading Hollywood stars, use slurs and half-truths to create myths and legends about ourselves to impress succeeding generations. The facts are interesting enough.

Keith Rowe and Lou Gare were members of that struggling eleven-piece band that I ran, with John Surman, in the early Sixties. It was a real melting-pot, and a time of great searching and experiment. It was before the days when stylistic barriers were erected – people from different backgrounds could all enjoy playing together. There was no compulsion, and no financial incentive.

The musicians were not imprisoned in some tyrannical regime, "straining at the tether of the black Afro-American jazz models to which they were obliged to conform" and from which they were obliged to flee as "refugees". The members of AMM have no need to give their work status by disparaging former colleagues. Their work stands, like that of the rest of us, for all to judge.

The musicians interviewed, and Ansell himself, use language to cast themselves in the role of heroic refugees from musical oppression and injustice. On the contrary, stylistically the band was wide open. In fact, the first experience that those musicians had of "free" collective improvisation was in that band. At that time I was responsible for setting up those weekly "free" blowouts of which AMM was later formed. I can't remember when or why I stopped going.

We've all come on a lot since those days and I hope we're all wiser and more artistically mature and still free, in our different ways, to play the music we want to play. That early Sixties band contained the seeds of many future developments. To do interviews and try to score points over former musical friends and associates is unworthy of the music we played together all those years ago.

Mike Westbrook, London E3

We reproduce this letter in its entirety – Ed.

## RISING TO ROUSE'S DEFENCE

In his article on Thelonious Monk (*The Wire* 10: December), Brian Priestley discusses the work of Monk's collaborators of the Fifties, chiefly Rollins and Coltrane. He goes on to say that "as to Monk's subsequent saxophonist, Charlie Rouse, it might be better to maintain a discreet silence..."

Presumably he feels it would be indiscreet to ask why Monk should select such an incompetent musician as his long-time partner.

Well, Rollins (or Coltrane) would undoubtedly have been better if Monk could have kept him. But closer attention: Rouse's work with Monk will show that to say he is an unworthy collaborator is almost as questionable as saying that Monk himself is a pianistic bungler.

This criticism aside, your December issue was a treat, not least for the contributions of the excellent Max Harrison.

Andrew J. Hamilton, St Andrews,  
Fife, Scotland

## OTHER SIDE OF THE TRACKS

Yes, I do agree with reader K. Felton (*Letters – The Wire* 11: January) regarding the absence of track listings on reviews. These are always desirable but essential when reviewing re-issues.

My only other criticisms are the size of print and the sometimes clumsy juxtaposition of text on top

of page design which makes some articles almost impossible to read.

Your comment about "hard-pressed space" is noted but please bear in mind that some of your readers may not have perfect eyesight.

Stephen Peck, Leicester

I was about to write to you and comment on the lack of details given about records in *Soundcheck* when K. Felton beat me to it.

It is surprising that you omit such crucial details in a serious jazz magazine. To a discographer like myself, who buys such a mag for discographical details it renders your reviews virtually worthless.

I shall stop buying *The Wire* if you continue this practice.

Michael N Clutton, Leicester

There's absolutely no doubt that you should include track listings in your record reviews. In most issues there are blank spaces neatly filled by clever graphics – all very nice, but, surely, not at the expense of what is – for most record-buyers outside London – essential information.

We really would like to know if the next re-issue of Charlie Parker Savoy recordings has eight tracks per side (and what they are), or if it has four incomplete takes of each tune. Most records cost £5 or more and, if you can't just pop into Mole's Dobell's etc to look, or even listen first, record reviews become an important aid to avoid wasting a lot of money.

I don't want *The Wire* to become a discographers' collectors' journal but you really shouldn't neglect one of the primary functions of reviews, ie information.

Please reconsider.

Pete Hamshaw, Barrington, Nottingham

Fair comment – although, as we haven't been exactly overwhelmed by late letters regarding the omission of track listings, we assume that most of you aren't bothered. However, we have not made a final decision, so further comment on the subject would be welcomed. We take your point about the small size of type and have taken the appropriate steps in this issue – Ed.

## TURN IT DOWN!

Nice to see such a superb account of the last Welsh Jazz Festival by Stuart Nicholson (*The Wire* 11: January).

However, mention of one of the festival's major gremlins was omitted – the problem of over-amplification. Indeed, the Pharaoh Sanders and McCoy Tyner sets were so loud that it was positively indecent. After the concert I talked to many of the audience who also felt that they had been robbed (tickets £8.50!) because of the dreadful din.

All one could hear was the endless racket of amplified bass and drums. The piano, sax etc were, for most of the time, practically inaudible. Why was it necessary to mix up the drums, an instrument that is essentially loud to begin with? At the end, McCoy Tyner played a solo piano encore of Ellington's "Prelude to a Kiss". This brought a standing ovation, mainly for the sensational performance but also, I feel, for the fact that we could actually hear the piano.

As jazz reaches a wider audience, we as jazz enthusiasts must be careful that the problem of amplification is not left in the hands of the pop fraternity who go in for this kind of sei-indulgence. Jazz people must speak up for what they want – a lower decibel level which not only would be much easier on the ear but would also add greater clarity to the music itself (ie all the instruments can be heard in a homogenous texture).

The organisers of the festival and those in charge

of the amplification at St David's Hall should be thoroughly ashamed of themselves and should think carefully before next year's festival.

Gareth Davies, Llanelli, Dyfed, S. Wales

## ADVENTURES WITH LOCK

As a 27-year-old, I came to jazz through soul and my (late) father's record collection about four years ago. Your magazine is the perfect guide to the music's past, present and future glories. Thank you for leading me to Parker on Dial and Don Pullen's *Evidence of Things Unseen*.

May I congratulate all your writers on their knowledge and love of music and their ability to communicate this while still being "critical".

A special mention to Graham Lock – you have created a sense of adventure and enquiry which means you end up being read cover to cover, even articles I might, at first, be tempted to pass over.

Any chance of an article on Robert Wyatt?

Ian, Ipswich

A feature on Robert Wyatt is in the pipeline. – Ed.

## BUILDING BRIDGES

As a newcomer to your superb magazine, I was truly impressed by the variety and scope of the articles and reviews (*The Wire* 11: January).

Of course, it also had the bonus of Richard Cook whose article on Wayne Shorter almost persuaded me to go out and buy all his Blue Note recordings.

However, it was Chrissie Murray's personal opinion (*On The Wire: Bridges... Or Barriers?*) that arguably cut the deepest. It is chilling to think that, despite Brian Jones' comments regarding the snobbery surrounding jazz over twenty years ago, it still exists now.

Rock and jazz have always made uneasy bedfellows. However, talents in the rock world such as Tom Waits, Captain Beefheart, Tim Buckley, Deafunk, Iggy Pop (yes, that's right – indeed Iggy Pop is on record as saying John Coltrane is his main influence) in their own manner have introduced me to Miles Davis, Stan Getz, Charles Mingus, Eric Dolphy, Sonny Rollins (who played on the Rolling Stones' under-rated "Waiting For A Friend"), Monk, Art Pepper, Sun Ra among the many. I still listen to the above-mentioned "rock" music made by the mavericks and will continue to do so, whether "rock" is unfashionable or not.

Without them, I doubt I would have even bothered to make the effort to listen to so many talents in the "jazz" world. Apart from broadening my musical horizons, all I can further add is the sooner such foolish preconceived notions vanish from both spheres of music – the better.

Rob Jones, Twickenham, Middlesex

Much as I enjoy *The Wire*, certain remarks in the January issue irritated me, and as is usually the case, these had little to do with music per se.

Chrissie Murray says she found Brian Jones' words "extraordinary". I found them familiar – letters like his have always appeared in the jazz press. I will not bother to argue with her implication that all who disagree with her are narrow-minded, suffice it to say that the assumption of bigotry on the part of others is a type of bigotry in itself.

Murray makes two suggestions: 1) Use "street-level" language... more readily understood by the new generation; and 2) Cover "world music" defined as "all music made from the heart".

Of the first, which particular argot of which youth sect are we to use: the break-dancers, punks, mods (who should be "trad" by now), skins, rastas...? Youth is more prejudiced and complacent with its pigeon-holing than any branch of old jazzers.

The second suggestion is just unworkable. Who is to say which music is "from the heart"? A lot of rubbish probably is, and so is a lot of music given better coverage elsewhere. So little, comparatively, is available in the mass media about jazz, blues, gospel and pure improvised music that to include, for instance, pop (at a time when it represents probably the most creative music mankind has ever produced) and conventional classical music would seem to preserve rather than improve the position. I am not suggesting that *The Wire* should be more restrictive, but that there is little point in being so vague as to have no specific audience and, therefore, no central core of allegiance.

I think we had all better stick to our aesthetic guns. In my experience it is exposure to the

# BACK ISSUES

1 - Ren Blake; Comden on Camera; Eric Dolphy; Steve Lucy; Harold Land; Leo Records; Wynton Marsalis; Art Pepper tribute; Max Roach; Scatting & Boppling; Seven Steps to Jazz - Trumpet; John Stevens Part I; Women Live.

2 - Albert Ayler; Sidney Bechet; Eubie Blake tribute; Eric Dolphy discography Part II; Bill Evans; Festivals on Camera - Gerard Roux; Percy Grainger; Don McGlynn - film producer; George Russell Part I; Paul Rutherford; Seven Steps - Piano; Archie Shepp; Weather Report.

3 - Blue Note Covers; Channel 4's Jazz; Don Cherry; Festivals 83; FMP; Coleridge Goods; Jon Harriott; Earl 'Fatha' Hines; New York's Soundscape; George Russell Part II; Seven Steps - Tenor; Pat Smythe; Muddy Waters tribute; Urban Sax.

4 - John Cassavetes; Ganell Trio reviews reviewed; Jan Garbarek; Billie Holiday; Iron Curtain Jazz; Parker Dial sessions; Seven Steps - Drums.

5 - Cadillac Records; Coltrane's *A Love Supreme*; Count Basie tribute; Ted Curson; Miles Davis concert; Festivals - Moers and Ljubljana; Harry Gruenberg; Abdullah Ibrahim (Dollar Brand); Metalinguage; Michel Petrucciani; Seven Steps - Bass.

6 - Art Ensemble of Chicago; Benny Carter; Charly Rabb; Andrew Cyrille; Manu Dibango; Leo Macario; Meredith Monk; Paul Murphy; Oliver Nelson's *The Blues and the Abstract Truth*; Recording Improvised Music; Trevor Watts' *Moiré Music*; Where Were You In '62?

7 - Alterations; Armstrong's *West End Blues*; Amiri Baraka; Black Meisks; White Masks; Art Blakey; Borbetomagus; *Jazz At The Phil* re-issues; Hugh Masekela; Thelonious Monk; Jerry Wexler.

8 - AMM; Blue Note Reborn; Eric Dolphy's *Out To Lunch*; Last post Jalal Nurdin; "Novelty" Plantists; Irene Schweizer; Seven Steps - Trombone; UK Blues Indies; Wayne Shorter.

9 - Afro Jazz; Laurie Anderson; Gone ... But Not Forgotten - Vic Dickenson, Dennis Rose, Collin Walcott; Chris McGregor; Phil Minton-Roger Turner; New Year's Honours List; New York Ear & Eye - Gospel, Ma Rainey, Cecil Taylor; Max Roach's *We Invist! Freedom Now Suite*. Please note: Issues 2, 5 & 6 out of print.

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unadulterated product that gains new fans for jazz (or anything else) not, as Murray says, pop musicians using jazz material or jazz musicians "crossing over". I know a lot of people who own Pretzel Logic but none of them has "delved" into Duke's records. Had Art Blakey "crossed over" in the Fifties, like Tony Kinsey, would he be so fashionable now? I doubt it.

And, apropos of tributes by rockers to jazzers, what about Steely Dan's unacknowledged use of Silver's "Song for My Father" riff on "Rikki Don't lose that Number", or the Strangers doing the same with "Take 5" on "Golden Brown"? Then we have the notorious "Night Train" "derived" from Duke's great "Happy Go Lucky Local" and numerous other instances. I don't think the "insular" jazz world has been so remote from pop as your editor (production) suggests but they have been remote from its profits.

Some "footnotes" on the January issue: I thought I had escaped from Mr Higgins' prose by cancelling my subscription to *Coda* but he pursues me across the wide Atlantic. I think we could do without his brand of mystification and pomp. He's the sort of bloke who must say "vital respiratory action" rather than "breathing".

As for Jalal Nurdin's statement that "Unlike Christianity (Islam) is a religion in which the basic tenets eliminate racism", tell that one to Jesse Jackson and "born-again" Eldridge Cleaver.

If you can tolerate any more, I have one suggestion myself. It is now fifteen years since the publication of *The Essential Jazz Records*. That indispensable volume listed 200 records covering 1945 to early 1969, at that rate it should be possible to list about 120 records for the period 1969 to 1984. My record collection, alas, and my musical knowledge are not up to the task myself but I wonder what your writers could come up with.

Fred Middleton,  
Smethwick, W. Midlands

Thanks so much for January's Bridges . . . or Barriers?

It was marvellous to see such a concise and convincing summary of my own views. What amazed me was that the examples Chrissie Murray quoted of the "dinosaurs' attitude to the contamination of jazz by rock, Coryell with the Burton Quartet, *In A Silent Way*, Keith Emerson's "Honky Tonk Train Blues" were as often as I constantly quota when discussing these matters with my friends.

I wonder how these purists got into the music they love, by the way? Via Thirties British dance bands, Gerry Miller, or other such "impure" stuff, no doubt! I understand one eminent fossil slags off Stan Getz for his use of Latin rhythms: as one mate pointed out, where does that leave Jelly Roll Morton? The mistake we could so easily make, however, is to dismiss such folk out of hand - they are well worth reading when being positive about the music they do love.

I got into blues via John Mayall and Cream and now worship Robert Johnson, Patton, Skip and so on. I got into jazz through Gary Burton and now love Shepp, Trane, David Murray, Cecil Taylor etc.

The colour of a musician's skin, his bank balance, or his political opinions should not colour our appreciation of his music. The problem I find is how to enjoy a wide range of music (in my case, from Joy Division to Delius) in the face of people who might accuse you of being indiscriminate. I suppose the answer is to regard it as their loss, not yours.

Steve Millward, Withington, Manchester  
In an otherwise typically good issue, a sour note was sounded by Richard Cook in his review of Abdullah Ibrahim at the Shaw Theatre (*The Wire* 11: January).

I find Richard's impressions of the gig (I saw both concerts) surprising but, then, each to his own. However, the review raises some more serious questions about the function of music criticism which, surely, is to provide enlightened comment and to attempt an explanation of its rationale to a potential audience.

It was ironic that Chrissie Murray's piece in the

same issue argued (rightly) for a more open-minded attitude and, yet, there was Richard neatly slipping Ibrahim into an inappropriate "crossover" bag, informing us that he doesn't like the music to start with and implying that no self-respecting fan should either (in as jazz pianist for people who don't like jazz pianists) sideswipe.

Does this kind of negative approach actually serve any useful purpose? If not, why bother? Or is it all to do with preserving that "exclusiveness" that Chrissie Murray discusses?

Richard cites Don Pullen et al as being pianists deserving more attention. Agreed, but please can we read about those talents in a more positive context and not at the expense of a unique artist who, it seems, has the gall to become actually comparatively popular?

Geoff Collins, Chelmsford, Essex

Chrissie Murray writes:- Pleased that the Bridges . . . or Barriers? opinion piece elicited so much reader-comment. To set the record straight (and console the delightful Ian Carr who wrote to say he couldn't believe it . . . I have been a devoted and dedicated follower of jazz for nearly quarter of a century not "decade", as copy 0'm older than I look - at least, that's my excuse)

We reserve the right to edit letters. Send your views, comments, criticisms to: Letters, *The Wire*, S1 Beaumont Street, London W1R 3DH.

## CROSSED WIRE

Gremlins' Department: We apologise to musicians Phil Minton and Roger Turner, and writer Kenneth Ansell, for their feature (*Out of Cold Storage* - *The Wire* 12: February) appearing pasted up in the wrong order. The gremlin responsible for this nonsense has been packed off to a Siberian salt-mine for six years to discover what "*Cold Storage*" really is. Ed.



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